

Peasant Communities, Peacebuilding, and Social Change in Colombia

Submitted in fulfilment for the requirement of the degree of Ph.D.

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Summary

My research is about the resistance and peacebuilding initiatives of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (CdPSJA), the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (ACVC), and the Carare Worker and Peasant Association (ATCC) in Colombia. These communities were created by internally displaced peasants to protect civilians, to challenge the power structures that sustain the conflict, and to eventually build peace. My central research question asks how an analysis of civil local peace initiatives that resist power networks and structures responsible for the prolongation of conflict in Colombia contributes to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies. My research is informed by the ideas and concepts of the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, in an attempt to offer new perspectives on peacebuilding studies. Conceiving of peacebuilding processes as struggles for hegemony, my research identifies three key elements based on which peasant communities' role in building peace can be assessed. The transformation of common sense into a critical consciousness, the control over space through strategies of war of position, and the building of alternative historical blocs all help explain the dynamics of the three communities under study. The argument of this thesis is that peasant communities have managed to develop counter-hegemonic alternatives. But whilst they succeeded in considerably reducing levels of violence amid armed conflict, it remains to be seen whether they will be able to contribute to bringing about structural change in a post-conflict setting. My research finds that their initiatives are likely to be integrated within the government's model for the post-conflict setting. My findings then offer new insights on social change from below and the role of the state within peacebuilding processes.

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Sylvain Lefebvre
Cardiff, Wales
May 2017

Recurring abbreviations

ACCU - Córdoba and Urabá United Self-Defense Groups (Autodefensas Unidas de Córdoba y Urabá)

ACVC - Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (Asociación Campesina del Valle del Rio Cimitarra)

ANUC - National Association of Peasant Users (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos)

ANZORC - Peasant Reserve Zone National Association (Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reservas Campesinas)

ART - Agency for the Renovation of the Territory (Agencia de Renovación del Territorio)

ATCC - Carare Worker and Peasant Association (Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare)

AUC - Colombian United Self-Defense Groups (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia)

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

CCMM - Peasant Coordination of the Magdalena Medio (Coordinadora Campesina del Magdalena Medio)

CdPSJA - Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó)

CIJP - Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace (Comisión intereclesial de Justicia y Paz)

CIZRC - Peasant Reserve Zones Organising Committee (Comité de Impulso de las Zonas de Reserva Campesina)

CNACEP - Agricultural National Summit: Peasant, Ethnical and Popular (Cumbre Nacional Agraria: Campesina, Étnica y Popular)

CNRR - National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación)

CP - Peace Constituents (Constituyentes por la Paz)

CREDHOS - Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (Corporación regional para la defensa de los derechos humanos)

ELN - National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional)

EPL - Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación)

EU - European Union

FARC-EP - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Popular Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército Popular)

FOCO - Federation of Peasant Organisations of the Carare Opón (Federación de Organizaciones Campesinas del Carare Opón)

FoR - Fellowship of Reconciliation

FOREC - Funds for the Reconstruction and Social Development of the Coffee Axis (Fondo para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Social del Eje Cafetero)

IACHR - Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

INCORA - *Colombian* Institute for Agrarian Reform (Instituto Colombiano para la Reforma Agraria)

IPE - International Political Economy

MAS - Death to Abductors (Muerte a Secuestradores)

MCVDR - Communal Roundtable for the Dignified Life of the Region (Mesa Comunal por la Vida Digna de la Región)

MIA - Agriculture and Popular Roundtable for Dialogue and Agreement (Mesa Agropecuaria y Popular de Interlocución y Acuerdo)

MMDP - Magdalena Medio Development and Peace Program (Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio)

MoP - Member of Parliament

MP - Patriotic March (Marcha Patriótica)

MRPTPMM - Permanent Regional Working roundtable for the Peace of the Magdalena Medio (Mesa regional permanente de trabajo por la paz del Magdalena Medio)

NGO - Non-governmental organisation

OFP - Grassroots Women's Organisation (Organización Femenina Popular)

OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

ONIC - Colombian National Indigenous Organisation (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia)

PBI - Peace Bridages International

PCN - Black Communities Initiative (Proceso de Comunidades Negras)

RECORRE - Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance (Red de Comunidades en Rupture y Resistencia)

REINICIAR - Corporation for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (Corporación para la defensa y promoción de los derechos humanos)

RRI - Integral Rural Reform (Reforma Rural Integral)

PCS - Project Counselling Service

PDET - Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial)

TPC - Texas Petroleum Company

TPSN - Territory, Place, Scale, Network

UAF - Family Farming Unit (Unidad Agrícola Familiar)

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USA - United States of America

ZRC - Peasant Reserve Zone (Zona de Reserva Campesina)

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Peasant Communities, Peacebuilding, and Social Change in Colombia

Introduction

My research is about the resistance and peacebuilding initiatives of peasant communities in Colombia and their role in building peace. My interest in this research is firmly rooted in practice. I spent five years in Colombia, four of them working for the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Peace Brigades International,¹ which provides protective accompaniment to human rights defenders and communities of internally displaced people. This thesis is in part a reflection on my time spent working with human rights defenders, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombian communities, and peasant communities, and victims of the conflict. I had the opportunity to work with small-scale farming communities, which have been internally displaced by both illegal armed groups and the state. These communities were created by internally displaced peasants who decided to join forces in the face of extreme violence. Their goal is to stay on or return to their land. They are an expression of the many land-related conflicts at the heart of Colombia's problems. Born of the violence imposed on them by the armed conflict, the state, and neoliberalism, their efforts represent an attempt to protect civilians, to challenge the power structures that sustain the conflict, and to eventually build peace.

The subject of this research could not be timelier. The Colombian government signed in September 2016 a peace agreement with what was until last year the oldest guerrilla in activity on the Latin American continent. The Colombian government argues that rural communities will be instrumental in implementing the agreement. This is illustrated by the government's use of the concept of territorial peace, which places rural issues and communities at the heart of the peace process and serves as the basis for implementation of the agreement.

This agreement marked the end of a 60-year civil conflict that has left indelible marks on Colombia and on its people. The beginning of the current conflict dates to the mid-1960s, when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)² and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were born. In addition to the armed conflict, other types of violence linked to the drug trade, common crime, and paramilitary groups intensified in the 1980s. This intensification of

¹ For more information on Peace Brigades International Colombia, see <https://pbicolombia.org/>

² Whilst FARC-EP is the full name of the FARC since 1982, I have only used FARC throughout this thesis for the sake of simplicity.

the conflict added to the suffering of Colombian people and to the complexity of the situation. The different kinds of violence are now interrelated, and the contemporary dynamics of the conflict cannot easily be explained by looking at its root causes.³ It is now estimated that 7.2 million people have been internally displaced,⁴ more than 50 000 have disappeared,⁵ and more than 200 000 have died⁶ as a result of the armed conflict. Paradoxically, despite all this violence, Colombian civil society and human rights organisations are amongst the most dynamic in Latin America, if not the most vibrant. Local resistance has grown and spread all over the country within indigenous, Afro-Colombian, peasant, and urban grassroots communities, from the Caribbean coast to the Amazon, and from the plains bordering Venezuela to the Pacific. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether this resistance can represent a credible force for peace in the post-conflict setting, or whether the situation of these subaltern groups will remain the same as the structural causes of the conflict remain unchallenged. This is the interrogation that I explore in this thesis.

Central research question

My central research question then asks how an analysis of civil local peace initiatives that resist power networks and structures responsible for the prolongation of conflict in Colombia contributes to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies. This question was born out of a reflection on my work experience with human rights defenders and small-scale farming communities. It is also the product of a dissatisfaction with how local actors and peacebuilding processes have been analysed within the peacebuilding literature, as I further explain in the literature review. Following the logic of my central research question, I have identified three key elements that inform my analysis of the role of these peasant-community initiatives. The role of consciousness, the spatial dimension, and the model of social transformation that peasant communities put forward are key to understanding their initiatives. These elements help me assess their role in building peace, both pre- and post-conflict, and inform the following three sub-questions:

³ Pécaut, D. *Guerra Contra la Sociedad* (Bogotá, Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2001)

⁴ UNHCR. 'Hoja informativa: Colombia'. (Geneva, United Nations Refugee Agency, 2016)

⁵ Grupo de Memoria Histórica. 'Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad' (Bogotá, Imprenta Nacional, 2013). p. 58.

⁶ Grupo de Memoria Histórica. 'Basta Ya!', p. 58.

- How did peasant communities manage to move from a passive obedience to armed actors and the state to resistance (Chapter 3)?
- How did peasant communities manage to challenge relations of power through the establishment of control over space (Chapter 4)?
- How did peasant communities develop social, economic, and political alternatives; build alliances; and link their initiatives to peacebuilding at national level (Chapter 5)?

Contribution to knowledge of the thesis

Research into the role of these communities in building peace can greatly benefit our understanding of the outcome of peacebuilding processes. While there have been many claims about the contributions of civil society to peacebuilding, most of these claims have been within a liberal framework of analysis that looked at civil society's contribution in strengthening a Western and liberal model of democracy.⁷ Most studies or reports on initiatives by local communities make normative claims about their role in building peace⁸, but in-depth studies of the role of local communities in building peace and challenging power structures that sustain violence and armed conflict are lacking. While a considerable number of peace agreements all over the world have put an end to overt armed conflict, they have failed to address its roots causes, as the example of Guatemala illustrates well⁹. Similarly, civil and non-violent movements have succeeded in throwing over authoritarian regimes, but failed to challenge power structures in the long term. A study into the role of local actors in challenging the structures and actors at the root of conflict and violence will give new insights into the role of local actors within peacebuilding processes. This is where the main

⁷ Barnes, C. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Mapping Functions in Working for Peace', *The International Spectator*, 44:1 (2009) pp. 131–147; Bell, C., O'Rourke, C. The People's Peace? Peace Agreements, Civil Society, and Participatory Democracy, *International Political Science Review*, 28:3, (2007) pp.293–324; Paffenholz, T. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding', Working Paper (Geneva, The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2009).

⁸ Alther, G. 'Colombian peace communities: the role of NGOs in supporting resistance to violence and oppression,' *Development in Practice*, 16:03–04 (2006) pp.278–291; Arbeláez Rudas, M. 'Comunidades de Paz del Urabá choacoano, Fundamentos jurídicos y vida comunitaria', *Controversia*, 177 (Bogotá, CINEP, 2001) pp. 11-40; Belalcázar Valencia, J.G. Las comunidades de paz: formas de acción colectiva en resistencia civil al conflicto armado colombiano. *Revista Entorno Geográfico*, 7-8 (Enero/Diciembre 2011) pp.196–209; Burnyeat, G. 'On a Peak in Darien: Community Peace Initiatives in Uraba', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 5:3 (2013) pp.435–445; Diéz Gómez, A.D. 'Cuando la neutralidad no existe: Historia reciente del Urabá Antioqueño', *Dialéctica Libertadora*, 2 (Enero 2009) pp. 47-64.

⁹ Short, N. *The International Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Guatemala* (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

contribution to knowledge of this thesis lies. My thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the way that it traces the histories and social processes of three peasant communities, and the varied strategies they use to develop an agenda of resistance and peacebuilding that go beyond their particular interests as peasants and challenge power structures and the violence attached to them. Any effort to draw out the significance of these processes for a wider understanding of peacebuilding is important to the debate on peace in Colombia and elsewhere. My thesis gives empirical depth to the critical peacebuilding literature, but also shows the weakness of the latter in not demonstrating how the material basis for change is necessary to peace, and the role of social agency in making that possible.

While I take the literature on peacebuilding as a starting point, my research lies at the intersection of three fields of academic study: peacebuilding studies, resistance and non-violence studies, and Gramscian studies. In this thesis, I contribute to the peacebuilding literature by designing a new theoretical framework for the study of the role of local actors within peacebuilding processes. To do so, I borrow from the literature on resistance and non-violence studies and above all from the political theory of Antonio Gramsci. My thesis is therefore informed by the ideas and concepts of the Italian thinker¹⁰, and Marxist thoughts more generally, as an attempt to bring new perspectives on peacebuilding and statebuilding studies. In this regard, this thesis moves away from the peacebuilding literature, and develops a framework of analysis based on Gramsci's political theory, which allows me to address the gaps I identified in the literature. As explained further in Chapter 3, I decided to use Gramsci's political theory to think about Peasant communities' resistance and peace initiatives as a mobilisation of social forces around a particular project (the communities), which has a strategic dimension (how to bring about social change) and is intended to realise something that does not actually exist (peace). But Gramsci's theory of hegemony not only provides me with tools to think about the strategies of peasant communities, it also allows me to address the broader context of peasant communities' resistance, and the very hegemonic structures and projects they attempt to challenge. In other words, Gramsci is useful when thinking about the working of power within societies, about the nature of state power, and about the potential for resistance. His concept of the integral state, constituted by political society and civil society, points to the fact that state power lies in the social and ideological consensus

¹⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 2003)

within which its institutions evolve, and in the ability of one social group to gain or extract the consent of other groups and institutionalise this power. Gramsci's integral state is useful when thinking about the power of the Colombian state and its uneven presence over the territory; a state that has never managed to control conflicts emerging within the social sphere; a state which is deemed to be weak while its violence has had a tremendous impact on society. Such an approach also draws attention to the lack of hegemony in war-torn societies, what Gramsci terms an 'organic crisis'. This relates to the lack of cohesion within Colombian society, a society that is socially fragmented and politically divided by two parties. It also helps explain why democracy has coexisted with extreme violence in Colombia. The restricted character of democracy in Colombia has contributed to the emergence of actors who are perceived as 'external' to society and are to be excluded: indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, peasants, workers. In fact, the power of the state and the maintenance of the interest of the dominant groups relies on this exclusion. Peasants are part of these groups. Violence has in some cases been their means of expression. For instance, the FARC has peasant roots. But violence is also used as a mean to control peasants. Finally, Gramsci's concept of passive revolution is useful to explain the outcome of peacebuilding processes, a state-led strategy to integrate the demands of subaltern groups without compromising the economic structure. This happened in Colombia in the twentieth century, with the vote of a new progressive constitution in 1991, the demobilisation of illegal groups, and human rights being enshrined in the constitution. The social basis of the state and the capitalist and neoliberal economic structures, however, remain untouched. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and its related concepts are about the nature of state power, about how this power is exercised, but might also be opposed. I think that the emphasis on class struggle, on the social basis of state power and its exercise, and on the resistance to such power, can bring new perspectives on peacebuilding, on the role of local actors therein, and on weak states and state formation processes.

The adoption of a theoretical framework based on Gramsci's political theory requires some explanation about what is at stake in taking on a Gramscian perspective, both regarding the use of Gramsci's concepts in the historical context of 21st century Colombia, and the Marxist commitment that comes with it. Indeed, turning to Gramsci to think about civil wars and peacebuilding processes might not seem obvious at first, and any employment of Gramsci's concepts brings with it a specific understanding of a number of concepts such as

labour, production, mode of production, or class. In this regard, Adam David Morton warns about the twofold danger of divesting 'Gramsci's view of historical development of any Marxist dialectic' or entirely disregarding the historical context in which Gramsci developed his own thought.¹¹ Thus, Morton advocates for a 'dual approach' that 'promotes treating texts as vehicles for the exercise of present preoccupations'.¹² My thesis follows Morton's call for 'thinking in a Gramscian' way about current situations,¹³ and adopts Gramsci's understanding of power in capitalist societies and peripheral countries. Whilst identify is not reducible to class alone, I think that class struggle is key to understanding historical developments. However, my thesis does not fully commit to a Marxist philosophy of history, which posits that the bourgeois class will be superseded by the proletariat. Within this way of thinking, the proletariat is a universal class that is meant to become a modern prince and surpass the limitations of the bourgeoisie. I do claim that peasant communities are key to any lasting peace and new social system in Colombia, but I limit this claim to the Colombian context, given the fact that rural issues are at the roots of the conflict and the key location of these communities within this conflict.

Gramsci developed his political theory by reflecting on societies where peace was the norm. It is therefore legitimate to ask what the limits of applying Gramsci's theories to contexts of armed conflict are, what the explanatory power of concepts such as hegemony, passive revolution, or the historical bloc in violent settings is, or how it is possible to account for external intervention within war-torn societies. By establishing a link between Gramsci's concepts and the peacebuilding and statebuilding literature, however, it is possible to conceive peacebuilding and statebuilding as processes informed by power struggles between rulers and the ruled, between dominant groups and subaltern groups. These struggles are themselves historically rooted in and informed by specific modes of production and cultural, social, and political structures. This perspective has the advantage of not determining any *a-priori* ethical and normative content to the concept of peace, therefore avoiding any theologism. A Gramscian perspective on peacebuilding and statebuilding processes stresses the need to address the ensemble of social relations and ensure their cohesion, instead of targeting only one of the multiple layers that constitute society – such as the market, civil

¹¹ Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (London, Pluto Press, 2007), pp. 16-17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

society, the state, or culture – and the mechanisms and practices associated with its reproduction or transformation – such as violence, norms, institutions, laws, and rights. A critical realist view of these processes attuned to their complexities therefore emerges, based on a Gramscian understanding of power and the reproduction, transformation, and conservation of social orders.¹⁴ Such a view is sensitive to the historical and social structures of armed conflicts settings, such as the unevenness of state power and state formation or the changing and fluid power dynamics between the actors taking part in the conflict, which are too often overlooked by peacebuilding and statebuilding mainstream accounts. It is also sensitive to the different layers of the social world, to the complexities of war-torn societies, to the structures and mechanisms through which power operates, and to the strategies deployed by all actors involved. Finally, Gramsci's ideas and concepts help me answer the central research question of this thesis. How does an analysis of civil local peace initiatives that resist power-networks and structures responsible for the prolongation of conflict in Colombia contribute to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies?

Argument of the thesis

Nestling my argument between the literature on peacebuilding, civil resistance and non-violence, and Gramsci, I explain that the nature of the peace achieved in Colombia will depend on the outcome of the struggle between rural communities and the State, not on external intervention of conflict management techniques. The capacity of peasant communities to challenge power structures at the origin of both the conflict and their current situation is therefore key for the outcome of the peace process in Colombia.

The argument of this thesis is that peasant communities have managed to develop counter-hegemonic alternatives to the domination of traditional political and economic ruling elites. They are then in a strong position to challenge the development model that sustains violence and armed conflict. But whilst all three communities under study succeeded in considerably reducing levels of violence, protecting their members, and developing alternative models in the midst of armed conflict, it remains to be seen whether they will be, or have already been, able to contribute to bringing about structural change in Colombia in a post-conflict setting. The challenges they faced during the armed conflict in the context of

¹⁴ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*.

extreme violence are indeed different to the ones posed by the post-conflict setting. My research has identified three key elements which were instrumental to the success of peasant communities' resistance, based on which their role in building peace can be assessed, both pre- and post-conflict. The transformation of common sense into a critical consciousness, the control over space through strategies of war of position, and the building of alternative historical blocs all help explain the dynamics of the three communities under study.

My research finds that their initiatives are likely to be integrated within the government's model for the post-conflict setting. Peasant communities have not yet managed to spread their critical consciousness within political society. Neither have they gained key positions within the economy beyond their local horizons. I argue that their ability to further challenge the power structures which lies at the roots of violence and armed conflict in Colombia depends on their capacity to spread their critical consciousness within political society, to challenge the anti-peasant bias that pervades civil society, and to build bridges with urban social groups. This ability also depends on the degree to which they establish control over space and succeed in transforming their social power into political representation at national level. Otherwise, the tools and strategies that were useful in the midst of armed conflict will unlikely bring about structural changes. Neither will they allow peasant communities to build peace on their own terms. The nature of the peace that will be achieved depends on the outcome of the relationship between the government and rural communities.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in six chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the case studies and a reflection on the methods I used in order to answer my central research question. It also conducts a detailed literature review, identifying the gaps my research aims to address, and setting the stage for the design of my theoretical framework based on the political theory of Antonio Gramsci.

Chapter 2 then develops a theoretical framework for the analysis of the role of peasant communities in building peace based on Gramsci's political theory. This chapter also lays the groundwork and informs the rest of the thesis. I use Gramsci's concepts to think about non-violent resistance and local peace building initiatives in the context of the

Colombian armed conflict and its resolution. I argue that Gramsci's spatial awareness, historical sociological approach, and reflections on the relationship between dominant and dominated groups prove useful tools for thinking about such communities, conflicts, and peacebuilding processes, and for explaining their outcomes. I explain in broad terms the meaning of Gramsci's concepts and show their relevance for the study of local actors' peace initiatives, such as peasant communities in Colombia. I discuss the epistemological and methodological grounds on which the application of these concepts to civil war settings in general, and Colombia in particular, rest. Finally, I conclude by laying the groundwork for the empirical case-studies that follow, discussing Gramsci's own criteria for the study of subaltern groups and engaging with issues of consciousness, autonomy, power, and political and social change. The transformation of common sense into a critical consciousness, control over space through strategies of war of position, and the building of alternative historical blocs are the three key dimensions that help me explain the dynamics and logic of peasant communities' peacebuilding initiatives.

Chapter 3 looks at how the three peasant communities under study managed to transform common sense into a critical consciousness, thus reinstating the political process while facing extreme violence. I argue that their ability to go beyond the common sense imposed upon them by armed actors, the state, and traditional political parties alike created opportunities in a context that did not seem to offer any. The emergence of a particular political consciousness, linked to a conception of the world that challenges the common sense imposed upon subaltern groups by ruling elites, and the loss of fear have interacted with each other from the birth of these peasant communities until the present day. I demonstrate that the loss of fear was instrumental to the decision to break the law of silence and overtly resist armed actors and the state. It was also key to building the collective strength required to sustain such initiatives over time. Finally, the loss of fear made possible the unity of thought and practice, symbolised by the adoption of the guiding principles of neutrality, nonviolence, and human rights. These principles informed the normative framework that enabled members of the peasant communities to resist in the midst of armed conflict.

Chapter 4 analyses the strategies employed by the communities to establish control over space. It argues that such control over space is key to the place members of peasant communities occupy within society. However, a material basis was required onto which this new critical consciousness could be enacted and materialised. I demonstrate that the

territory provided such a material basis, not only for the subsistence and everyday lives of peasant communities, but also for their memory-building efforts and for the development of alternative modes of production based on solidarity and dignity. I argue that the extent to which peasant communities managed to assert a control over space determined their place within society, as expressed in terms of individual and collective rights, location within the economy, and political power. In this regard, a capacity to control space is key to challenging the impact of the neoliberal economic policies promoted by the state.

In chapter 5, I use Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc and the national popular to look at efforts by peasant communities to build alliances. In building such alliances, peasant communities have developed different models of social and political transformation to bring about peace. These models range from the self-autonomy of the CdPSJA with their rejection of both the State and capitalism, to the confrontational, power-seeking strategies of the ACVC, and the liberal stance of the ATCC and their efforts to bring the state back in. I argue that these approaches help explain the extent to which each one of these peasant communities succeeded in challenging the power structures at the root of the armed conflict.

Chapter 6 reflects on and concludes the case-study chapters within the context of the government's concept of territorial peace, as the latter is the bedrock of its post-conflict policy and strategy. I show that the most likely outcome of the peasant communities' struggle is that they will be integrated within the government's post-conflict policies and vision. I argue in this chapter that the struggle between peasant communities on one hand, and the state and neoliberalism on the other, is likely to end up in a process of passive revolution; meaning that some of the peasant communities' demands will be integrated into the government's vision for the post-conflict setting, symbolised by the concept of territorial peace. It also means that peasant communities will maintain a strong impact at the local level, depending on the extent to which they have managed to develop alternative historical blocs, and that Colombia's ruling elites will make concessions, to a certain extent. But my findings and conclusion also point to the fact that peasant communities' initiatives are likely to be absorbed by state power and the capitalist economic system, rather than lead to systemic and structural social change.

Chapter 1: Literature review and methodology

Introduction to the case studies

Justification of the case studies

I used a theory-driven empirical approach to my research. At the heart of this thesis lays a concern with the struggle of the many communities and activists I had the chance to meet in Colombia. The experience of these people and my encounter with them are the starting point of my research. My aim is to say something meaningful about their struggle for peace in Colombia. I did not choose the topic of my research according to either theory or the need to fill a gap in the literature, but according to my own experience and knowledge of these communities. However, this experience led me to develop assumptions about the role of these actors regarding peacebuilding in Colombia, which give the thesis its rationale and theoretical basis. Therefore, some of the justifications that I put forward in justifying my case studies have been made *a-posteriori*. The reasoning for the choice of the specific cases, however, has been made *a-priori* to highlight differences between these cases and make their comparison both meaningful and useful to answer the central question of this research. I ground and support my assumption that these communities have a fundamental role to play in building peace by looking at these experiences through the lens of theory and existing academic literature.

First of all, my aim is to understand how an analysis of civil local peace initiatives that resist power networks and structures responsible for the prolongation of conflict in Colombia contributes to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies. There are many kinds of local actors who claim to be building peace in Colombia. These actors range from NGOs, human rights activists, and lawyers, to rural communities, be they indigenous communities, Afro-Colombian communities, or peasant communities. They have all suffered the consequences of the conflict and have articulated different responses to facing violence and building peace. Considering my research question, I decided to focus on rural communities because they are located in highly strategic regions where the conflict reached its highest level of violence. It is in these regions – which have only relatively recently been colonised by a migrant population in search of land for their subsistence, and where the state has historically been absent – that the struggle for one of the central issues of the Colombian

conflict is most visible, namely land. In other words, these communities are at the core of the conflict, where actors and structures, ideas and material factors meet, and where the impact and nature of the conflict can be seen in their most visible, clear, and raw dynamics and manifestations. A close look at these the histories of these communities and initiatives therefore takes us deep into the superstructures of the armed conflict, into its political, social, and cultural dynamics, the analysis of the former being often overlooked at the expense of the structural causes and foundations of the latter in the literature about civil wars and conflicts.

These communities can be considered as a product of the conflict, of state violence, and of neoliberal economic policies in Colombia in the sense that they constitute local responses to these challenges. In this regard, it can be argued that the armed conflict and state violence produced three kinds of sociocultural responses, including the one led by peasant communities: (1) the indigenous people's struggle for autonomy, (2) civil resistance by peasant communities, and (3) pragmatic adaptation of the Internally Displaced People in urban centres. I follow two Colombian scholars, Clara Ines Garcia and Clara Ines Aramburo, who argue that it is crucial to understand these communities' experiences both as protection and reaction to deal with the armed actors' pretensions and interests on one hand, and as ways of increasing their autonomy, self-organisation, and identity construction on the other hand.¹⁵ The creation of these communities is a political act, determined by the self-recognition of its members as political and social subjects, willing to claim sovereignty over the land, and determined to struggle for the respect of their political processes and fundamental rights by all armed actors. But I go further and argue that the experiences of these communities have also to be understood as peacebuilding practices. My assumption that peasant communities can play a key role in building peace in Colombia comes from the fact that they are also a product of the conflict.

My second decision was to focus on peasant communities rather than choosing communities from other ethnic backgrounds, such as indigenous or Afro-Colombian communities. The reasons for this choice are threefold. First, while indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities also lead resistance movements which share similar characteristics with peasant-led resistance movements, their differences are too important to be compared

¹⁵ García de la Torre, C.I. & Aramburo Siegert, C.I. (eds.), *Geografías de la guerra, el poder y la resistencia* (Bogotá, Cinep-Odecofi, 2011) p. 430.

based on just one case study per group. The significance of my findings would have been undermined had I chosen only one case study for each one of these groups, as they would not necessarily be representative of the whole group. Also, on a more practical level, the time and resources available to me did not allow in-depth research on each of these groups, which represent a unique world in their own right. Second, while the Afro-Colombian population accounted in 2005 for 10.5% of the population, and the indigenous for 3.4%, the non-ethnic population – within which peasants should be included – constituted 85.94% of the population according to the last census.¹⁶ Whereas the census does not specify the share of peasant population living in the countryside, it does suggest that the peasant population is much larger than the Afro-Colombian or indigenous populations.¹⁷ Even though Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities might be as visible as peasant communities, the presence of the latter covers a wider part of the territory; there are more peasant-led communities than any other ethnic communities.¹⁸ Finally, the most important reason for focusing on peasant resistance is that these communities in Colombia have a long history of resistance. Their struggle can be traced back to the nineteenth century. This resistance is intimately tied to the long-lasting agrarian problem in relation to the tenancy, use, and exploitation of land, which is in turn one of the main issues at the origin of the conflict. Therefore, my research starts from the assumption that these communities are key to a post-conflict peacebuilding phase in Colombia and to the implementation of the agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government.

Regarding the choice of specific communities as such, I focus my attention on high-profile communities with significant differences to enable useful comparisons regarding their strategies, their discourse, and their attitudes towards the state. While not the first to formally organise as a non-violent community in order to resist armed conflict, the CdPSJA¹⁹ has become one of the best-known peace initiatives. Since its creation in 1997, it has managed to survive in one of the most violent regions of Colombia. Its radical position and decision to break all relations with the Colombian state has stirred much controversy but has also inspired many people to grant it moral, political, and economic support. The CdPSJA finds

¹⁶ DANE, 'La visibilización estadística de los grupos étnicos colombianos' (Bogotá, Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas, 2005) p. 27.

¹⁷ DANE, 'La visibilización', p. 27.

¹⁸ DANE, 'La visibilización', p. 27.

¹⁹ Throughout this thesis, I have translated the names of the three peasant communities I look at, but I have kept their abbreviated forms in Spanish.

its grounds in the principle of neutrality and the distinction between civilian populations and armed combatants. It legally owns the land on which it has established its settlements. In contrast, the ACVC does not own the land where its members are living, but relies on a legal figure to assert its control over the territory. The ACVC managed to pressure the Colombian government into recognising its zone of influence as a Peasant Reserve Zone (ZRC).²⁰ This peasant initiative finds its roots in the Meta department in 1987; its legal character was recognised by law in 1994.²¹ Also, in 2010, the ACVC won the National Peace Prize awarded by several international and national organisations, and promoted by the German and French embassies²². It has therefore a wide national influence and directly engages in talks with the government. Finally, the ATCC was the first successful experience of civil resistance in Colombia. One of the main characteristics of the ATCC's strategy was to engage in dialogue with all the armed actors. Born in 1987, the association received the Right Livelihood Award, promoted as an alternative Nobel Prize, in December 1990, which brought it to the attention of the national government. Since 2007, it has been the beneficiary of a Collective Reparation Plan designed in collaboration with the CNRR.

To conduct a meaningful comparison, it is necessary that the cases show some differences but also that they share a common ground. The common basis for the comparison can be unfolded as follows. First, these communities all claim to contribute to building peace in their own settings and to be the bearers of alternative models of development, political and social order, and peace. They seek to promote a positive social change, or even construct their own alternative social order outside of the sphere of influence of the state. But they also call upon the state to protect their physical integrity and provide basic services. In other words, they build their identity *in resistance* to the *actual* state, but *in reference* to an *ideal* state and democratic society. Second, they were all constituted in regions that have only recently, been colonised and have usually been considered as havens or zones of refuge. They are also regions where the state and its institutions have historically been weak, if not absent. Finally, they are all instances of resistance to the same context of interrelated dynamics of violence caused by the confrontation between the state, guerrillas, and paramilitary groups;

²⁰ The ZRC scope and purpose are defined by a national law, No. 160 of 1994. As such, the law guarantees the collective rights of peasants to manage their own territory, and their individual rights to own the land through the Family Farming Unit.

²¹ Agencia Prensa Rural, 'Más allá de las "republicuetas"' *Prensa Rural* (Barrancabermeja), 17 March 2013. Available at: <http://prensarural.org/spip/spip.php?article10446> [Accessed 23 May 2017]

²² PBI Colombia. 'ACVC wins Colombia's National Peace Prize' (Bogotá, PBI Colombia, 13 December 2010). Available at: <https://pbicolombia.org/2010/12/13/acvc-wins-colombias-national-peace-prize/> [Accessed 22 May 2017].

the exploitation of natural resources; the drug-trafficking business; and the socio-political conflict. All these conflicts are interrelated, their separation to some extent artificial, but they can be brought down to one common element: control over the land.

Historical and sociological background of peasant communities

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (CdPSJA)

The CdPSJA was created 23 March 1997. The birth of this peasant community symbolised the convergence and confluence of several processes as shown by Aparicio.²³ The experience of tenant farmers fleeing from paramilitary groups, the activism of political parties and organisations, and the action of national and international NGOs based on international humanitarian and human rights norms: all these processes led to the creation of the CDPSJA. The massive displacement of thousands of peasants due to violence by paramilitary groups in 1996 was the concrete factor that led about 400 families to gather and think about possible alternatives. It is now one of the oldest and best-known peasant communities in Colombia. The original idea of a Peace Community was first given to the peasants of San José by Monsignor Cancino, Bishop of Apartadó. The small farmer population of the township of San José de Apartadó then declared itself as neutral to express its willingness not to be involved in the armed conflict, supported by the bishop and two national organisations: CINEP and Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz.²⁴ Besides reiterating their right not to participate in the armed conflict, the small-scale farmers of the Peace Community developed a holistic organisational process based on nonviolence. The community thus showed that its initiative was not only aimed at self-protection but also at the elimination of the conflict and the construction of peace. Its internal rules offer a sense of community, solidarity, and economic autonomy. This alternative way of achieving set goals provides its own responses to the basic human and co-existential needs of its members. Through a participative structure, it has developed autonomous systems for training and economic solidarity, among others.²⁵

²³ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*.

²⁴ Giraldo Moreno, J. *Fusil o Toga, Toga y Fusil*, (Javier Giraldo Moreno, 2010), pp. 33-35.

²⁵ PBI Colombia, 'Peace Initiatives in Colombia', *ColomPBIa* (Bogotá) n°19, November 2012, p. 10.

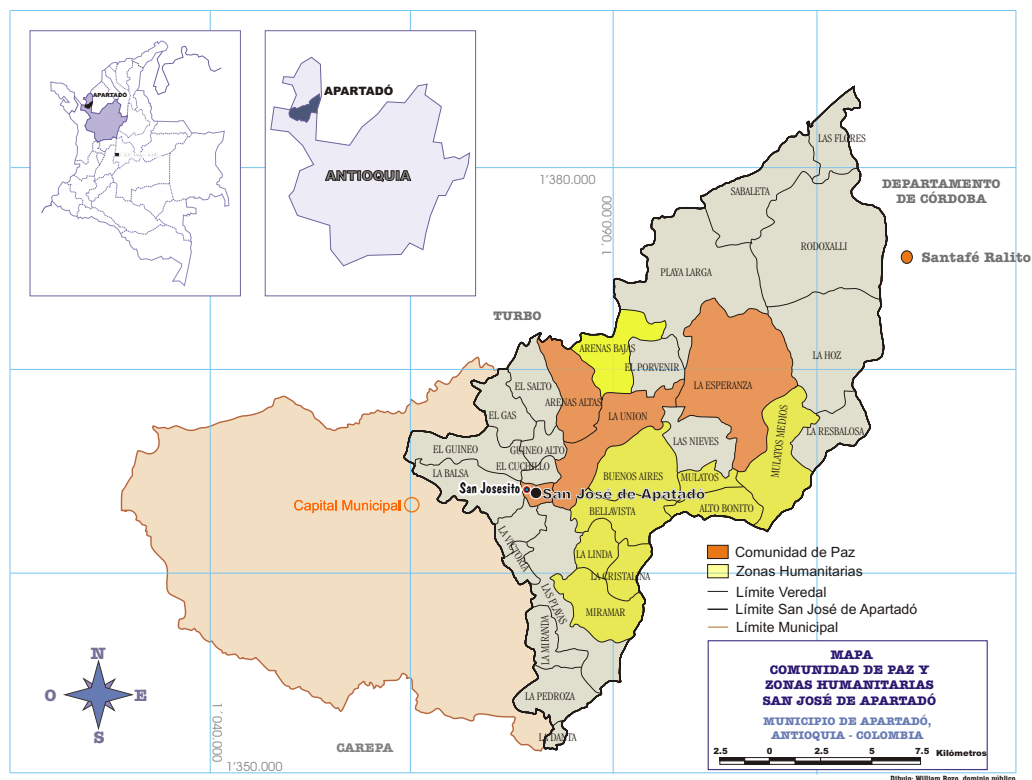


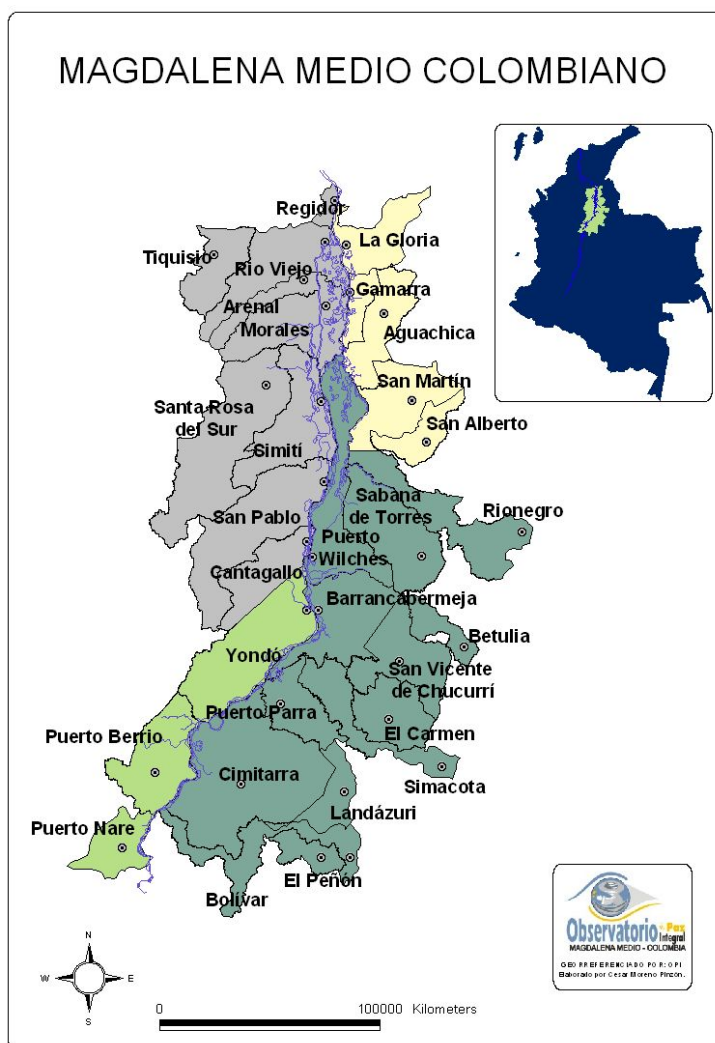
Figure 1 - Location of the settlements of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó within the municipality of Apartadó

The small township of San José de Apartadó is located in a strategic area along the foothill of the Serranía de Abibe (Figure 1), a region in dispute between several armed actors such as drug traffickers, FARC, paramilitary groups, private entrepreneurs, and the state. Until the paramilitary incursions in the 1990s, the township of San José had been a stronghold of leftist political parties such as the Union Patriótica and a zone of influence of the FARC. While the mountains of the Serranía de Abibe are still a FARC rear-guard, control of paramilitary groups which emerged from the demobilisation of the former *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) is now dominant. These groups impose their social and political control over the land and its inhabitants, to the benefit of economic interests and with the tacit approval of the state.²⁶

²⁶ Hristov, J. *Blood and Capital: The Paramilitarization of Colombia* (Toronto, Between the Lines, 2009); Uribe de Hincapié, M.T. 'Emancipación social en un contexto de guerra prolongada: el caso de la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó, Colombia', in *Democratizar la democracia: los caminos de la democracia participativa*, edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Madrid, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005); Uribe de Hincapié, M.T. *Urabá: región o territorio, un análisis en el contexto de la política, la historia y la eticidad* (Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, 1992).

The Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association

The ACVC was created in 1996 after several peasant protests took place in September and October 1996 in San Pablo and Barrancabermeja. It is composed of 120 Community Action Councils (*Juntas de Acción Comunal*) belonging to the municipalities of Yondó, Cantagallo, San Pablo, and Remedios (Figure 3). The peasants living in these areas have been displaced because of the armed conflict in other regions or within the Magdalena Medio region itself (Figure 2). The ACVC is integrated by three branches covering the four municipalities already mentioned. According to the organisation, the ACVC was created to resist against the prevailing development model in the Magdalena Medio, promote an



authentic and definitive agrarian reform, and defend the dignity, rights, and solidarity of the peasants.²⁷ Even though the ACVC was formally created in 1996, the social, economic, and political movement that led to its birth can be traced back to the 1980s and is intimately linked to peasant resistance against the various interests of several actors to assert their social, economic, and military control over the land. A few Peasant leaders began to encourage the development of a peasant economy. This organisational process led to the creation of community shops or cooperatives, each of which was coordinated by

Figure 2- The Magdalena Medio region.

²⁷ Equipo técnico Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra, '¿Qué es la Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra?', (Barrancabermeja, ACVC, 2009). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/acvc/quesomos.htm> (22 May 2017).

an administrative council and an administrator. These community shops and cooperatives then became the centre of this economy based on exchange and barter.²⁸

At the beginning of the 1990s, several landowners of the region began to feel threatened by the organisational and economic strength of this peasant-led process, and targeted the cooperatives.²⁹ This is also when the violence caused by the confrontation between the state, paramilitary groups, and the guerrillas reached a peak and caused massive displacements of population. The peasants of the region then started to speak out and organise protests to urge the government to pay attention to their situation. In 1996, two marches were organised in San Pablo and Barrancabermeja that led to the signing of agreements with the government, around the need for social, economic, and agrarian reforms. Unfortunately, neither one of these agreements was implemented. This, and action by paramilitary groups, led the peasant movements, now formally represented by the Permanent Regional Working roundtable for the Peace of the Magdalena Medio (*Mesa regional permanente de trabajo por la paz del Magdalena Medio - MRPTPMM*), to organise what they named the exodus of 1998; it lasted for 103 days and mobilised around 10 000 peasants. The outcome was the signing of new agreements with the government on 4 October 1998. In addition to renewed social and economic commitments, the government reaffirmed its willingness to strengthen the fight against paramilitary groups and their supporters in the Magdalena Medio region.³⁰

After the signing of these agreements, the ACVC initiated a request for the creation of a ZRC. After a long administrative and political process, the ZRC was finally approved on 10 December 2002, only to be cancelled by the Alvaro Uribe Velez administration in January 2003. After 10 years of struggle, the ACVC finally managed to get the decree recognising the Cimitarra Valley as a ZRC reinstated in 2010, when a new President, Juan Manuel Santos, was elected. Since December 2000, the Magdalena Medio region has been the target of the paramilitary violence in collusion with the state's armed forces. This caused massive displacement of the population. The aim of this repression of the peasant population and members of the ACVC can be explained by their opposition to economic projects related to the exploitation of oil and gold and the design of new waterways and roadways. The intent

²⁸ ACVC, 'Plan de desarrollo de la Zona de Reserva Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra' (Barrancabermeja, ACVC, 2000), pp. 11-17.

²⁹ ACVC, 'Plan de desarrollo', pp. 12-13.

³⁰ ACVC, 'Plan de desarrollo', pp. 15-16.

of paramilitary groups in asserting their control over the land was related to money laundering coming from drug-trafficking through land purchase, the palm oil agribusiness, and extensive cattle farming.

Peasant Workers Association of the Carare Region (Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare - ATCC) and the South of Santander region

Ever since Spanish colonisation, the Carare region has been characterised by its isolation from the core settlements, and later as a haven with a weak state presence. Several social groups found there a refuge where they could live their lives and benefit from the rich natural resources of the region.³¹ As the Cimitarra Valley, it is part of the Magdalena Medio region, but its development and dynamics are quite different, as it represents a natural sub-region within Magdalena Medio. From the 1940s onward, the Carare region saw several surges of colonisation of its lands, first in an attempt to exploit wood and cultivate cocoa, rice and vegetables under the direction of local authorities. Then, people fleeing the violence caused by the confrontation between the Liberal and Conservative parties arrived. From these first population surges were born the peasant-led organisational processes that would characterise the region in the 1970s and 1980s and in which the ATCC leaders took part.³²

While not the first peasant-led civil resistance experience in Colombia, the civil resistance initiated by the ATCC is often considered as pioneering. Created in 1987, the visibility of the organisation gradually increased until it reached its peak in 1990 when the ATCC was awarded the Right Livelihood Award.³³ Older members of the ATCC recall the period leading to the creation of the association as one of increased violence due to the confrontation between the state's armed forces, paramilitary groups, and guerrillas. The 1970s and 1980s were indeed characterised by an increase of the intensity of the conflict due to the presence of the FARC and the ELN, who first entered the region in 1975, and a counterinsurgency campaign led by the Colombian army, in addition to the actions of paramilitary groups from 1982 onward.³⁴ During this time, approximately 12 years, an estimated 530 to 585 civilians were killed, 60% by the paramilitary groups and 40% by guerrillas.³⁵ To find a solution to this bloody dynamic, several leaders belonging to villages of

³¹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 25.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³⁵ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians in civil war: The institution of the ATCC in Colombia', *Journal of Peace Research*, 50:3 (2013) p. 353.

the Carare River Valley secretly gathered in May 1987. The armed groups had issued an ultimatum for the local population to displace, join them, or be killed. Refusing to arm themselves or to join the actors in the military conflict, the leaders decided to engage in dialogues with the latter and organise non-violently for peace and development. And so, the ATCC was born, with the aim of guaranteeing the rights of its members to life, peace, and work.³⁶ The ATCC's area of influence is located in the south of the Santander Department (Figure 3) and covers the municipalities of Bolivar, Cimitarra, Sucre, La Belleza, El Peñón, and Landáurri, along the Cimitarra River Basin and where the state's authority does not stretch.

All three communities have therefore a large history of resistance, have articulated a clear discourse, and developed well-grounded practices throughout the past 30 years. They represent some of the most prominent experiences of peasant communities in Colombia and have received large international support. Their transnational links provide insights into the local and global dimension of peacebuilding and resistance. These three communities illustrate different ways to assert autonomy, challenge the state authority and sovereignty, and build peace. However, even though they all started as a reaction to the seemingly unmanageable level of violence that struck them as a result of the armed conflict, and even though they based their discourse and practices on the human rights and international law – in particular the distinction between civilians and armed combatants and the concept of humanitarian zone – they came up with different strategies to protect their members, influence the behaviour of armed actors and that of the state, and articulate alternative visions of a peaceful social change. To start introducing the rationale of this thesis, it is useful to frame such local peace initiatives within past and current academic debates. The following section engages in a discussion on how the peacebuilding literature has analysed the role of local actors, including not only communities but also civil society organisations or urban associations, within peacebuilding processes. The explanation of the rationale and argument of this thesis will logically follow and build on this discussion to conclude this introduction.

³⁶ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado'.

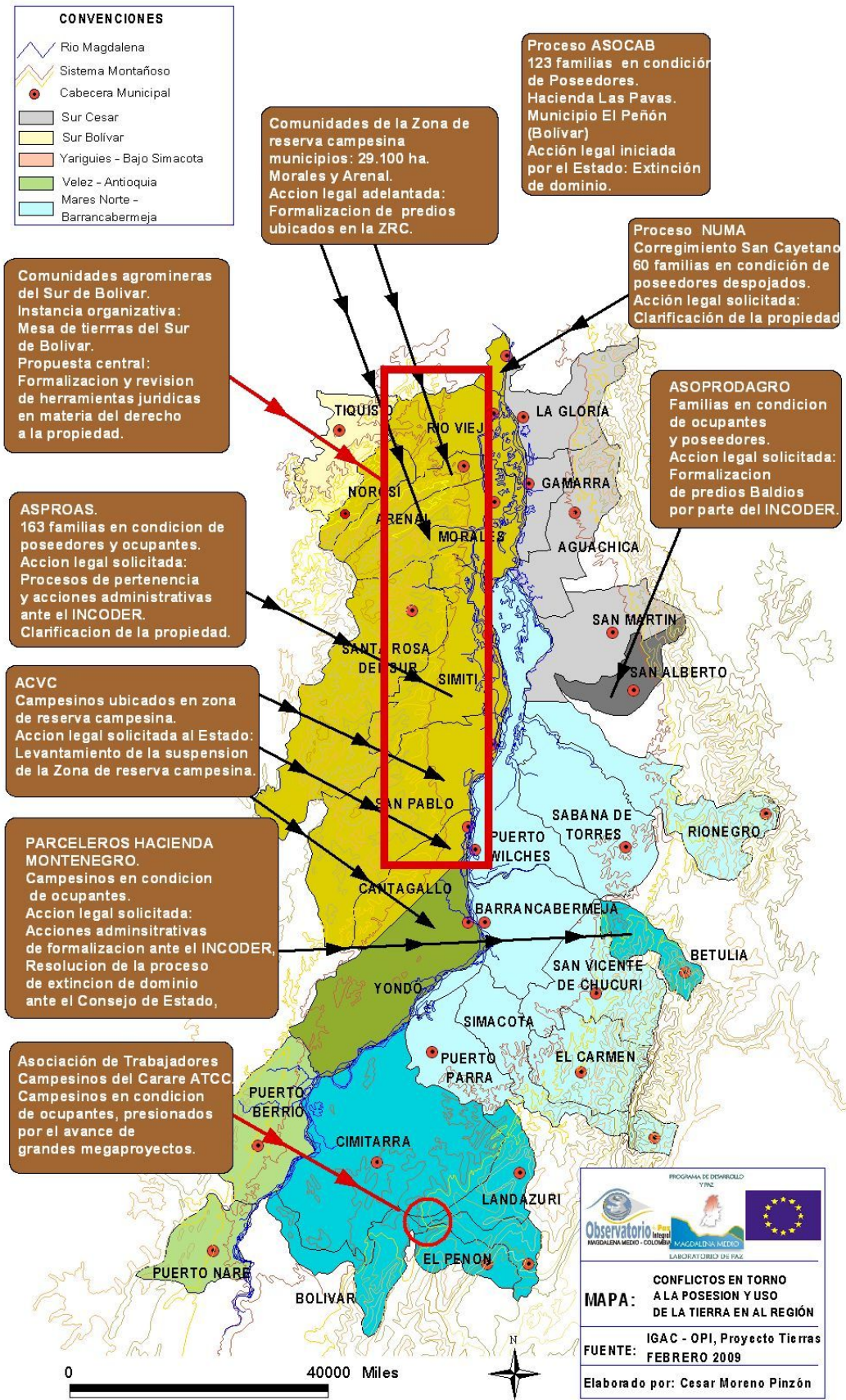


Figure 3 - Conflicts surrounding land tenure and use in the Magdalena Medio region. Source: IGAC - OPI, Proyecto Tierras, February 2009.

Methodology

From NGO worker to researcher

I have myself, as a foreigner working for a human rights organisation, been part of the highly polarised Colombian context, and this invites a discussion about my previous experience living and working in Colombia and the differences that I experienced returning there as a researcher. Prior to undertaking this PhD, I worked for PBI in Colombia, which gave me the opportunity to accompany the CdPSJA and the ACVC. While such experience contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of the struggle faced by peasant communities, it may also introduce bias or subjectivity in my argument in the sense that my solidarity is with these communities. Nevertheless, by acknowledging this subjectivity and adhering to academic research standards, I have managed to overcome this obstacle. Arguably, the interaction of the researcher with the world and the world's influence on the researcher forms part of a circle of reflexivity; a truly objective position does not exist.³⁷

Thanks to that prior experience, access to the CdPSJA and the ACVC was very easy. I simply wrote an email and received a positive response. However, returning to the CdPSJA and the ACVC's settlements as a researcher was a very different experience to working alongside these communities as an NGO worker. The purpose of my presence within their settlements was not the same, and my position as a researcher in relation to these communities differed significantly from the one I had as a NGO worker. To put it simply, while the CdPSJA and the ACVC requested and expected something from me in my capacity as an NGO worker and representative of PBI Colombia, upon my return as a researcher it was now me as an individual who needed something from them. While the communities needed access to the protection that I, with my white t-shirt with a PBI logo on it, could provide them by being physically present within their settlements, as a researcher I needed access to their words, perspectives and views on the questions that I brought with me during my field research.

This position as a researcher came with responsibilities toward the communities. I had the obligation not to put them in danger, to abide by their community rules while spending

³⁷ Hamati-Ataya, I. 'Reflectivity, reflexivity, reflexivism: IR's "reflexive turn" -- and beyond', *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:4 (2012); Hamati-Ataya, I. 'Transcending objectivism, subjectivism, and the knowledge in-between: the subject in/of "strong reflexivity".' *Review of International Studies*, 40:1 (2013).

time within their settlements, and to be as transparent as possible regarding the activities I wanted to undertake. For instance, I always asked the community leaders before going to interview military or police officers. In one case, I decided not to conduct the interviews due to concerns raised by the leader of the community. While I was conducting fieldwork in Colombia, I also heard that communities were tired of researchers or people visiting the communities and failing to engage with them after getting what they needed. In this regard, I am afraid that I have failed so far to consistently engage with all three communities about the results of my research. I have not given up on engaging with them though, and I aim to do so in the following months.

My experience with the ATCC was totally different, as I did not know the Association before I went to visit them during my fieldwork. I was very fortunate to be introduced to the President of the ATCC by a researcher from the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation. I also had the chance to go there with another PhD researcher who was undertaking his field research at the same time as I was and was not only studying the experience of the ATCC but the CdPSJA's as well. In this case, my initial contact with the President of the ATCC was key, as he arranged almost all interviews for me and took me to several remote settlements. The fact that I already knew the CdPSJA and the ACVC, but not the ATCC before undertaking my field research created some sort of imbalance in the way I looked at each community. I quickly realised that I looked at the ATCC's experience through the lens created by my knowledge of the CdPSJA and the ACVC. For instance, I expected to find in the ATCC the same sense of community, and the same alternative, anti-capitalist and anti-establishment political ideas. However, this was not the case and this first came as a surprise to me. I was immediately intrigued, and my reflections on these differences deepened my research and clearly shaped the conclusions I reach in this thesis. In this regard, the method and theoretical framework I developed in chapter 2 helped me mitigate this original bias. This framework allowed me to look at all three communities through the lens of similar criteria.

My prior professional experience in Colombia finally explains the fact that I approached my field research from a deductive and not inductive perspective. It was impossible for me to approach this subject without preconceived ideas about the initiatives of peasant communities. Having a very clear idea and concrete experience of my empirical subject, I then started to reflect on theory in the light of my pre-existing knowledge of the

resistance and peacebuilding initiatives led by CdPSJA and the ACVC. The theoretical framework I apply throughout this thesis is not therefore something that emerged during field research. Even though a Gramscian language can be found within some of the ACVC's publications and claims, this theoretical framework is something I brought to the field and applied to my empirical subject. I used Gramsci's ideas both as a methodology, for the study of local actors' resistance, and a theory, for the analysis of the wider political context of this resistance and how this resistance is related to this very same context. Gramsci's ideas acted as guiding principles for the choice of my methods during my field research, helped me formulate questions for the semi-structured interviews I conducted, and analysed the three dimensions I have identified in my sub-research questions and which I look at in chapters 3 to 5, namely the role of consciousness, control over space, and the building of alternatives and alliances. I used Gramsci's ideas to reflect on these three dimensions and inform the analysis of all three communities' role in peacebuilding.

Knowledge claims

Through this research about peasant communities in Colombia, I aim to produce idiographic knowledge claims. In defining the practice of peasant communities' resistance and their role in peacebuilding, I acknowledge that this practice is the product of a specific social and political context. As a result, all truth claims are specific only to this context. My aim is to draw lessons from a single case which could be extrapolated to other cases, as my central research question hints at. However, the eventual generalisation of my findings is not my primary aim, and it is therefore more reasonable to think that my research will only be valid in the Colombian context. Although I address the eventual generalisation in the conclusion of my thesis, this analysis is not part of the core of my research. This does not in any way lessen its significance, as I have already outlined. Neither is it crucial for my research findings, as it focuses only on Colombia.

My starting point is a social phenomenon that must be observed to evaluate its impact – positive or negative – upon other social processes, be they agents or structures. The causality I seek to uncover is thus both social and political. In this regard, a reflection on multi-causality and the relative significance of the specific causal relation I wish to uncover seems inevitable. Indeed, state formation and peace-building processes in Colombia are also being affected by a multitude of other causal elements, such as the dynamics of armed conflict, the

actions of social groups which do not belong to the human rights movement, or the actions of the Colombian government. In this thesis, I focus only on the role of peasant communities in building peace, but do this considering other causal elements and their relationships to the impact of peasant communities' practices. The theoretical framework I develop in Chapter 1, based on Gramsci's political theory, helps me to address this methodological consideration by emphasising political struggles between ruling elites and subaltern groups, while framing this struggle within the broader hegemonic structures in Colombia. In this regard, I use theory as 'a guide to empirical exploration' and the identification of causal processes.³⁸ This causal analysis also makes it necessary to engage in some kind of moral discussion, as my findings could be interpreted as enunciating a moral judgement. Reflecting my convictions, my research will seek to find evidence of the positive impact of peasant communities. Accepting that values and knowledge claims are often interrelated³⁹ and acknowledging the fact that the nature of the concepts I will analyse, such as peace and resistance, are both morally charged concepts, are unavoidable. This is even more so in the extremely polarised Colombian context, as the referendum on the peace agreement demonstrated in October 2016.

Rational and context of field research activities and methods

During my research, I spent three months in Colombia, with two-week visits to three peasant communities. The rest of my time I spent in the cities of Apartadó, Medellín, Barracabermeja, Bucaramanga, and Bogotá. I carried out 84 semi-structure interviews,⁴⁰ the majority with members of peasant communities. I also interviewed state officials, army and police officers, NGO workers, a member of the Constitutional Court, and Church members in all these cities. I attended a state-organised event about the concept of territorial peace and the role of rural communities regarding the implementation of the peace agreement. Even though I do not claim to use ethnographic methods, my analysis has inevitably been influenced by participant observation conducted both during my fieldwork and from

³⁸ Hay, C. *Political Analysis: a critical introduction* (New York, Palgrave, 2002) p. 47-48.

³⁹ Suganami, H. 'Causal Explanation and Moral Judgement: Undividing a Division', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011)

⁴⁰ A list of all interviews is available in the annexes to this thesis (see Annex 1). I chose to preserve the anonymity of my interviewees in order not to put them in danger. Where names are mentioned, they have either been changed or they refer to already well-known persons in Colombia. These persons have agreed to be explicitly named in my thesis. Formal consent was obtained and a consent form signed by each one of my interviewees. A full confidential list of interviews can be made available for examiners upon request.

experience while working with PBI. Finally, I was a visiting fellow at the University of Los Andes in Bogotá, which allowed me to present my work to a group of scholars from this university. My research heavily relies on the result of this fieldwork, during which I had access to the Colombian literature. In particular, I have to mention here the works of Aparicio⁴¹ and Burnyeat⁴² on the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (CdPSJA), and the report of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation⁴³ on the Carare Worker and Peasant Association (ATCC). These studies into two of the communities I look at provided me with invaluable insights and perspectives. I also collected a great number of primary sources about the three communities, in the form of internal documents, archives, and newspapers. The ATCC archives proved an extraordinary source of information. These archives were collected and systematised by the state-sponsored National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) during the writing of *El orden desarmado*, a research monograph on the history of the ATCC written by the Group for Historical Memory of the CNRR.⁴⁴ The Tierra newspapers published by the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (ACVC) were also a great source of information. The CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC are the three communities I look at in this thesis.

The design of the semi-structured interviews I conducted was informed by both early reflections on Gramsci's criteria for the study of subaltern groups and my previous experience in Colombia. The data gathered during these interviews was key for the final structure of this thesis. In this regard, my fieldwork considerably shaped my research by pointing at key dimensions of the struggles and initiatives of all three communities. Indeed, the three dimensions that are the subjects of chapters 3 to 5 all emerged during my field research. My reflection on these dimensions was then systematised by looking at them through the lens of Gramsci's key ideas regarding consciousness, strategies, and the building of alternatives and alliances.

My prior experience with the CdPSJA and the ACVC facilitated my access to their members, as trust was already established. This meant that even though I could only spend a

⁴¹ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores, residuos y Estado en "la mejor esquina de Sudamérica". Una cartografía de lo "humanitario" en Colombia* (Bogotá, Ediciones Uniandes, 2012).

⁴² Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política: Una con-textualización etnográfica de la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó* (Tesis de Maestría, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2015).

⁴³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado. La resistencia de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare (ATCC)' (Bogotá, CNRR, 2011).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

relatively short amount of time within all three communities, creating opportunities for interviews was also relatively easy, at least with the most visible leaders. While my priority was to interview leaders of all three communities, I identified other potential interviewees on the basis of interviews already conducted, informal discussions, and more spontaneous opportunities. I obtained prior consent from all my interviewees and preserved their anonymity in the vast majority of cases. When consent was given to mention their true name, I only mentioned names of the most visible leaders in the thesis, as this would not increase the risk they already face. The challenges I faced were related to the opportunities to interview less visible members, such as young people and women. The vast majority of my interviewees are historical members of the communities or current and prominent leaders. I struggled to interview younger members of the communities and this means that my thesis might not reflect their views on the questions and issues I raised. The fact that my interviewees are also mostly men means that a gender perspective could not be properly integrated within this thesis.

Another challenge was to get access to local state officials and employees. These officials and employees were not very willing to speak to me given the topic of my research and their own relationship with, or views on all three communities. When I obtained interviews, I was merely offered a very neutral and carefully thought discourse. Interviews with embassy officials were easier to obtain but did not prove very useful either in most cases. Overall, I used the remaining interviews I conducted with state officials, embassy officials, or NGO workers to address specific points in relation to their relationships with all three communities. Finally, the responsibility I had not to put the communities in danger constrained the way in which I explained my research to other actors, the extent to which I could move freely within and between the settlements of the communities, and the possibility of interviewing certain persons such as members of the military or police active within the communities' local settings.

Regarding my own individual security, I carried out a risk assessment prior to travelling to Colombia. Given the fact that I would carry out field research in very polarised and tense regions, I took it for granted that my presence would not be perceived as neutral to external observers and that the need to take security measures was evident. I obtained a student visa from the Colombian embassy in London. I also decided to always travel with members of the communities within and between their settlements. I choose to stay at the residences of

international NGOs in Apartado and Barrancabermeja rather than in hotels. While I did not face any security incidents during my stay in all three communities, another PhD student who travelled with me to the ATCC settlements did face an incident in the city of Cimitarra. He was approached by two men while waiting for the bus to Bogotá who asked him about what he was doing in the region and about his whereabouts. He told them he was waiting for the 8pm bus to Bogotá. The two men then suggested it would be better for him to take an earlier bus, the 6pm bus, and then left. Nothing came of this veiled threat, but it was a reminder of the control paramilitary groups still exert in the region.

Local actors, peacebuilding, and social change: a literature review

My aim in this thesis is to contribute to peacebuilding studies by bringing in insights from literature that is more directly focused on the role of social movements in resisting power. While I take the literature on peacebuilding; and in particular that on the role of local actors within peacebuilding process as a starting point, my research spans three fields of academic study: peacebuilding studies, resistance and non-violence studies, and Gramscian studies. In this literature review, I first explain my dissatisfaction with the peacebuilding literature. Then, I introduce insights from resistance studies and non-violence studies and demonstrate how the peacebuilding literature could benefit from integrating these insights for the analysis of local actors within peacebuilding processes. Finally, this literature review also paves the way for the design of my own theoretical framework based on Gramsci's political theory. My argument is that peacebuilding studies have assumed that conflict management, external interventions or mediation are necessary to build peace. The critical strand of the literature makes progress by placing the needs, culture, and rights of local actors at the centre of any sustainable peace. However, it still relies on the assumption that external intervention is necessary and is unable to explain how local actors' needs could effectively be prioritised. On the contrary, the literature on civil resistance and non-violence provides useful insights for the study of the capacity of local actors to challenge power structures, and therefore effectively materialise their needs, culture and rights. Nevertheless, civil resistance and non-violence studies' lack of attention to social and political contexts, their reductionist concept of power, and emphasis on technique or strategies led me to turn to the political theory of Antonio Gramsci. As I explain in more details in Chapter 2, I find that Gramsci's political theory

shares similarities with civil resistance and non-violence studies, but goes further. Indeed, it integrates civil resistance and non-violence studies' insights into a broader theory of social and political change that is better able to explain the outcome of political and social struggles. Gramsci acts as a bridge between all literatures discussed in the sense that his concept of hegemony provides a useful theory of social and political change in which human agency is awarded the ability to influence its environment without ever losing sight of the economic structures.

The peacebuilding and statebuilding literature has been characterised in the past decade by a prolific increase in the number of new publications, be they books or articles, reflecting a growing interest for statebuilding interventions and peacebuilding missions. Navigating the great diversity of themes, theoretical approaches, issues, and contexts addressed is a challenge. In addition, this literature borrows from several disciplines and fields of study, such as development studies⁴⁵, security studies⁴⁶, democracy promotion and democratisation⁴⁷, conflict resolution⁴⁸, state theory⁴⁹, and also now ethnographic and post-colonial studies⁵⁰. The main debates turn around the liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding norms, practices, and record: the promotion of democracy, market-based economic reforms, and the creation of state institutions aimed at regulating social and political conflicts.⁵¹ Liberal and critical approaches argue against one another without being able to go beyond 'liberal peace'. Many new solutions for war-torn societies have been suggested. But discussions seem to have reached an impasse.⁵² One of the most important issues at stake within this debate concerns the role of the 'local', a term which is used in very different – and sometimes confusing – ways in the literature. As much as the liberal vs. non-liberal divide, the local turn divides the liberal and critical strands of the literature. Even though there is a growing consensus about the need to integrate local contexts and actors within the analysis of

⁴⁵ Duffield, M. *Development, Security and Unending War* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007).

⁴⁶ Krause, K. Hybrid Violence: Locating the Use of Force in Postconflict Settings. *Global Governance*, 18 (2012) pp. 39–56; Milliken, J., and Krause, K. State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies. *Development and Change*, 33:5 (2002) pp. 753–774;

⁴⁷ Jarstad, A.K. and Sisk, T.D. (eds.) *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ Newman, E. and Richmond, O.P. *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution* (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2006); Zelizer, C. (ed.) *Integrated Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Transforming Conflict* (Boulder, CO., Westview Press, 2013).

⁴⁹ Call, C., and Wyeth, V. (eds.) *Building states to build peace* (Boulder, CO., Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008)

⁵⁰ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace* (New York, Routledge, 2011).

⁵¹ Newman, E. et al. (eds.) *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2009), p. 3.

⁵² Roberts, D. 'Beyond the metropolis? Popular peace and post-conflict peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, 37:5 (2011) pp. 2535–2556.

peacebuilding and statebuilding practices,⁵³ there is no agreement on what going ‘local’ means. Neither is there agreement on what must be done to better reflect local needs, culture, and identities, to use Richmond’s terminology⁵⁴. The local turn⁵⁵ divides the liberal and the critical strands of the literature to such an extent that there is almost no dialogue between the two.⁵⁶ As a result, the debates have reached an impasse and do not show any sign of progress. Liberal scholars do not leave the liberal framework of analysis alone but seek to fix it,⁵⁷ while critical scholars have made promising but yet unsatisfying attempts to theorise a ‘post-liberal peace’.⁵⁸

In the meantime, liberal and neoliberal peacebuilding and statebuilding practices have not lost their influence and continue to inform policies towards war-torn societies. Jahn argues that all development policies towards non-Western states, from modernisation theories to the transition paradigm to statebuilding interventions, share the same liberal assumptions.⁵⁹ She attributes the resilience of peacebuilding and statebuilding practices to “the power of the liberal ideology which constantly reasserts itself in spite of contradictory evidence”. Failure only confirms liberalism’s own superiority and blame is put on non-liberal countries. This attests to “the depth of its power as a cognitive framework”.⁶⁰ Much of the critical literature follows this analysis in pointing at liberalism’s flaws to explain the failure of peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions.⁶¹ As the failure of liberal peacebuilding and

⁵³ Bliesemann de Guevara, B. *Statebuilding and State-Formation: The Political Sociology of Intervention* (New York, N.Y., Routledge, 2012), pp. 10-11; Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 7; Paris, R. and Sisk, T.D. *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations* (New York, Routledge, 2009), p. 305; Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

⁵⁵ Hughes, C.; Öjendal, J. and Schierenbeck, I. 'The struggle versus the song – the local turn in peacebuilding: an introduction', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015) pp. 817–824; Leonardsson, H. and Rudd, G. 'The “local turn” in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015) pp. 825–839; Mac Ginty, R. and Richmond, O.P. 'The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34:5 (2013) pp. 763–783; Paffenholz, T. 'Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015) pp. 857–874;

⁵⁶ For example, in *Statebuilding*, Sisk only gives the slightest consideration to this critical strand of the literature before entirely dismissing it. Exceptions are Newman, E. et al. (eds.) *New Perspectives*, and Paris, R. 'Saving liberal peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, 36:2 (2010) pp. 337–367.

⁵⁷ Paris, R. *At War’s End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); Paris, R. and Sisk, T.D. *The Dilemmas*.

⁵⁸ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*; Richmond, O.P. and Mac Ginty, R. 'Where now for the critique of the liberal peace?' *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50:2 (2014) pp. 171-189.

⁵⁹ Jahn, B. 'The Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy: Democratization, Intervention, Statebuilding (Part I)', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:1 (2007) pp. 90-91.

⁶⁰ Jahn, B. 'The Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy: Democratization, Intervention, Statebuilding (Part II)', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:2 (2007) p. 226.

⁶¹ Boege, V. et al. 'Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (2009) pp. 599–615; Duffield, M. *Development*; Heathershaw, J. 'Unpacking the Liberal Peace: The Dividing and Merging of Peacebuilding Discourses', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 36:3 (2008) pp. 597–621; Mac Ginty, R. *International*

statebuilding missions to connect with local populations and local contexts and to live up to their standards and promises became obvious, a growing resistance to peacebuilding and statebuilding practices emerged. Going local was then seen as the magic formula to solve peacebuilding practices and studies. This has led to the development of concepts such as 'local ownership', 'do no harm', or 'local capacity building', and to the design of a results-based framework of analysis oriented towards the needs of aid organisations and practitioners.⁶² It has also given rise to a vast literature on the role of civil society within peacebuilding processes – only to some degree within statebuilding – in relation to democracy, state accountability or economic development.⁶³ However, the persistence of local resistance within war-torn societies indicates the need to rethink its impact and role within peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. On one hand, the emphasis on civil society's contribution to peacebuilding does not address the fact that the institutional and neoliberal framework of peacebuilding interventions has delegitimised local actors, denying them the capacity to promote meaningful political, social, and economic change. On the other hand, the critical literature has attempted to restore local actors' political agency, but this attempt is too conceptual to have any practical and meaningful impact. Neither strand provides useful analytical tools for the study of local actors' capacities to challenge power structures that both cause and sustain armed conflicts. We do not need any alternative concept of peace⁶⁴ or a new conceptualisation of the 'local', as some scholars have tried to

Peacebuilding; Pugh, M.; Cooper, N. and Turner, M. *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (London, Palgrave, 2011); Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

⁶² Fischer, M. 'Participatory Evaluation and Critical Peace Research: A Precondition for Peacebuilding', in 'Peacebuilding at a Crossroads? Dilemmas and Paths for Another Generation', edited by Schmelzle, B. and Fischer, M. Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Dialogue Series Issue No. 7 (Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009) pp. 87-98; Hopp, U. and Unger, B. 'Time to learn: Expanding organizational capacities in conflict settings', in 'Peacebuilding at a Crossroads?', pp. 77-86; Paffenholz, T. and Reyhler, L. *Aid for peace : a guide to planning and evaluation for conflict zones* (Berlin, Nomos, 2007); Schmelzle, B. 'Introduction: New Trends in Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)', in 'New Trends in PCIA', edited by Bloomfield, D.; Fischer, M. and Schmelzle, B. Handbook Dialogue Series No. 4 (Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2005).

⁶³ Barnes, C. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding'; Belloni, R. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Journal of Peace Research*, 38:2, (2001) pp. 163–180; Brysk, A. 'Democratizing Civil Society in Latin America', *Journal of Democracy*, 11:3 (2000) pp. 151–165; Kaldor, M. 'A Decade of Humanitarian Intervention: The Role of Global Civil Society', In *Global Civil Society 2001*, edited by Anheier, H.K., Kaldor, M., and Glausius, M. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001); Marchetti, R. and Tocci, N. 'Conflict society: understanding the role of civil society in conflict', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 21:2 (2009) pp. 201–217; Marchetti, R., and Tocci, N. (eds.) *Conflict Society and Peacebuilding: Comparative Perspectives*, (New Delhi, Routledge, 2011); Mercer, C. 'NGOs, civil society and democratization: a critical review of the literature', *Progress in Development Studies*, 2:1 (2002) pp. 5–22; Orjuela, C. 'Peace in Sri Lanka : A Role for Civil Society?' *Journal Of Peace Research*, 40:2 (2003) pp. 195–212; Paffenholz, T. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding'; Richmond, O.P. 'Critical agency, resistance and a post-colonial civil society', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 46:4 (2011) pp. 419–440; Rasmussen, D.M.V. *The West, Civil Society and the Construction of Peace* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); World Bank, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors', (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2006).

⁶⁴ Roberts, D. 'Beyond the metropolis?'

develop.⁶⁵ Neither do we need a new recipe or model for peacebuilding. Resistance and non-violence studies provide us with useful insights about how local actors could both challenge liberal peacebuilding models and guarantee their needs, interests, and rights for a more sustainable peace. These fields of study can help refocus the debate on national peacebuilding dynamics rather than on international interventions and the dichotomy between local and international actors. They can also emphasise local actors' strategies to bring about social and political change.

The gap between international and local actors

Although peace research was initially informed by grassroots and bottom-up perspectives, and developed by groups with a political concern (Schmid 1968: 217), top-down, technical and elitist approaches now prevail. The current literature has illustrated how the different peacebuilding and statebuilding approaches have so far failed to connect with local actors and consider local contexts. The liberal assumptions underlying peacebuilding endeavours in the 1990s were proven to be flawed. The idea that the creation of free markets and the implementation of democratic institutions would generate growth and economic development, break the dynamics of violence, and lead to a sustainable peace failed to live up to its promise. This acknowledged failure led to an emphasis on the need for strong state institutions before implementing liberal reforms. Statebuilding thus took prominence in the 2000s and informed peacebuilding policies. As the previous peacebuilding missions, statebuilding interventions were principally aimed at strengthening the stability and security of the international system by creating strong state institutions able to maintain a rather narrow model of peace. They were also informed by Western interests and ideas and sought to impose Western models of democracy. The difference between these two decades lies in the nature of the state that was being promoted. While peacebuilding in the 1990s was concerned with the "kind of state", statebuilding in the 2000s was concerned with the "degree of state".⁶⁶ However, statebuilding practices have rather reinforced the gap between international interventions relying on national elites on one hand, and local populations on the other.

⁶⁵ Kappler, S. 'The dynamic local: delocalisation and (re-) localisation in the search for peacebuilding identity', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015) pp. 875–889; Mac Ginty, R. 'Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015) pp. 840–856.

⁶⁶ Barnett, M. et al. 'Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?' *Global Governance*, 13 (2007) p. 36.

Several authors have analysed this gap.⁶⁷ They highlight the limits of top-down approaches to statebuilding and peacebuilding and how this generated resistance by local actors and led to a lack of legitimacy or peacebuilding and statebuilding missions. They show how the failure to consider local dynamics undermined peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives. Autesserre argues that local dynamics were crucial in fuelling the violence and prolonging the conflict in Congo between 2003 and 2006 and should have been addressed in order to achieve a sustainable peace.⁶⁸ According to her, a post-conflict peacebuilding frame prevented international actors tackling local peacebuilding issues and addressing local agendas. Chandler has shown how statebuilding denied the autonomy of the political process.⁶⁹ Finally, the critical strand of the literature has undertaken an ethical critique of the liberal peace and its impact on local populations.⁷⁰

The role of local actors within the liberal and critical strands of the literature

The mainstream liberal trend of the literature tries to answer three different kinds of question: How to build liberal and effective state and a lasting peace? Under what conditions does peacebuilding work? What works and what does not work? Although the institutional strand of the literature also acknowledges the importance of local contexts and the need to adapt peacebuilding and statebuilding missions to this context,⁷¹ civilians are absent from their account of peacebuilding and statebuilding and are granted no peacebuilding capacities at all. At best, peacebuilders should take some kind of social measures to improve “the living conditions of those segments of the population hardest hit by the structural adjustment”⁷² and reflect on how local actors could take ownership of liberal norms, values, and practices and be empowered. Instead, the literature focuses on how to deal with spoilers.⁷³ Local

⁶⁷ Autesserre, S. 'Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention', *International Organization*, 63:2 (2009) pp. 249–280; Chandler, D. *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2010); Lemay-hébert, N. 'The Bifurcation of the Two Worlds: assessing the gap between internationals and locals in state-building processes', *Third World Quarterly*, 32:10 (2011) pp. 1823–1841; Pouligny, B. *Peace Operations Seen from Below: U.N. Missions And Local People* (London, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 2006).

⁶⁸ Autesserre, S. 'Hobbes'.

⁶⁹ Chandler, D. *International Statebuilding*.

⁷⁰ Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*; Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

⁷¹ Fukuyama, F. *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004); Ghani, A. et al. M. 'Closing the Sovereignty Gap: an Approach to State-Building', Working paper 253 (London, Overseas Development Institute, September 2005); Paris, R. *At War's End*; Paris, R. and Sisk, T.D. *The Dilemmas*.

⁷² Paris, R. 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism', *International Security*, 22:2 (1997) p. 86.

⁷³ Avant, D. 'Making peacemakers out of spoilers: international organizations, private military training, and statebuilding after war', in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations*, edited by Paris, R. and Sisk, T.D. (New York, Routledge, 2009); Newman, E. and Richmond, O.P. *Challenges to Peacebuilding*.

parties are encouraged to meet certain standards of behaviour and political, social, and economic measures are designed to alter their behaviour. It is then generally assumed that, given the devastation brought by war, there is no capacity for peace at the local level and that international involvement is necessary.⁷⁴ In this regard, the role of international actors can be viewed as a modern version of the *mission civilizatrice*.⁷⁵ Paris argues that

Peacebuilding operations embody a type of globalisation that has gone largely unnoticed in recent discussions on international affairs – not a globalisation of goods and services, nor of cultural products like films and television shows, but rather, a globalisation of the very idea of what a state should look like and how it should act. To the extent that peacebuilding agencies transmit such ideas from the core to the periphery of the international system, these agencies are, in effect, involved in an effort to remake parts of the periphery in the image of the core.⁷⁶

The autonomy of civil society agents is not possible without external intervention. In other words, their agency depends on international capacity. For Chandler, underlying this perspective is a discourse rooted in the cultural difference between international liberal agents and local agents.⁷⁷ For Richmond, the local is conceived as an apolitical and pre-modern sphere of social interaction.⁷⁸

Within the mainstream strand of the literature, however, a growing number of studies has focused on how to integrate the contribution of local actors and institutions to peacebuilding so as to make the latter more effective. These studies have focused in particular on civil society's contribution to the different phases of peacebuilding processes.⁷⁹ NGOs, peacebuilding practitioners, and policymakers have heavily relied on these studies to support and justify their programmes.⁸⁰ The Peace Laboratories funded and promoted by the EU in Colombia are such an example.⁸¹ Others have studied the impact of decentralisation and the role of local governance in peace and development by increasing legitimacy, accountability, inclusion, and participation, and reached contested and opposite conclusions.⁸² The UK-based Institute for Development Studies (IDS) published a series of

⁷⁴ Doyle, M.W. and Sambanis, N. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵ Paris, R. 'International peacebuilding and the "mission civilizatrice"'. *Review of International Studies*, 28:4 (2002) pp. 637-656.

⁷⁶ Paris, R. 'International peacebuilding'.

⁷⁷ Chandler, D. *International Statebuilding*.

⁷⁸ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁹ Paffenholz, T. 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding'; Paffenholz, T. *Civil society & peacebuilding*.

⁸⁰ Leonardsson, H. and Rudd, G. 'The "local turn" in peacebuilding'.

⁸¹ Rodriguez, M. 'Colombia: From grassroots to elites - how some local peacebuilding initiatives became national in spite of themselves', In *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace*, edited by Mitchell, C.R. and Hancock, L.E. (London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012) pp. 69-92.

⁸² Leonardsson, H. and Rudd, G. 'The "local turn" in peacebuilding', pp. 828-829.

bulletins in which concepts such as security or governance are rethought 'from below'.⁸³ Following this local turn, the notion of 'local ownership' has become a buzz term.⁸⁴ New concepts and approaches have emerged to highlight local peacebuilding capacities and link them with national processes, such as community-based approaches,⁸⁵ Zones of Peace,⁸⁶ or Local Peace Committees.⁸⁷ However, these approaches still advocate functional or institutional solutions that do not address the political dimensions of peacebuilding.

The critical literature on peacebuilding has identified local actors and issues as key for building a sustainable peace.⁸⁸ In particular, it shows that liberal peacebuilding in practice is always the product of the interaction between international and local actors that often results in a hybrid peace.⁸⁹ This challenges the neat binary distinction between international and local dimensions of peacebuilding.⁹⁰ As part of this critical strand, the concept of hybridity has recently been developed in order to describe the nature and kind of peace that is emerging in post-conflict societies and has also been applied to other sectors or phenomena of post-conflict spaces, such as governance, violence, or institutions.⁹¹ Mac Ginty deploys

⁸³ Institute of Development Studies. 'An Upside-down View of Governance' (Brighton, IDS, 2010); Luckham, R. et al. 'Transforming Security and Development in an Unequal World', *IDS Bulletin*, 40:2 (2009).

⁸⁴ De Coning, C. 'Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2:1 (2013) pp. 1–6.

⁸⁵ Haider, H. *Community-based Approaches to Peacebuilding in Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts*, Issue Paper, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 2009).

⁸⁶ Mitchell, C.R. and Hancock, L.E. (eds.) *The Construction of Sanctuary: Local Zones of Peace Amid Protracted Conflict* (Arlington, VA., George Mason University, 2004); Mitchell, C.R. and Hancock, L.E. (eds.) *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace: Interaction Between Grassroots and Elite Processes* (London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012).

⁸⁷ Odendaal, A. *An Architecture for Building Peace at the Local Level: A Comparative Study of Local Peace Committees* (New York, N.Y., UNDP, 2010); Odendaal, A. *A Crucial Link: Local Peace Committees and National Peacebuilding* (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 2013).

⁸⁸ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*; Richmond, O.P. 'Emancipatory Forms of Human Security and Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Journal*, 62:3 (2013) pp. 458–477; Richmond, O.P. 'Failed statebuilding versus peace formation', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48:3 (2013) pp. 378–400.

⁸⁹ Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*.

⁹⁰ Kappler, S. 'The dynamic local'.

⁹¹ Boege, V. et al. *On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of Fragility* (Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008); Boege, V. et al. 'Building Peace'; Brown, M.A. et al. 'States Emerging from Hybrid Political Orders – Pacific Experiences' (Berlin, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008); Jarstad, A.K. and Belloni, R. 'Introducing Hybrid Peace Governance: Impact and Prospects of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Global Governance*, 18 (2012) pp. 1–6; Krause, K. 'Hybrid Violence: Locating the Use of Force in Postconflict Settings', *Global Governance*, 18 (2012) pp. 39–56; Mac Ginty, R. 'Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43:2 (2008) pp. 139–163; Mac Ginty, R. 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace', *Security Dialogue*, 41:4 (2010) pp. 391–412; Mallett, R. 'Beyond Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces: Hybrid Political Orders in the Post- Conflict Landscape', *eSharp*, 15 (2010) pp. 65–91; Millar, G. 'Disaggregating hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 51:4 (2014) pp. 501–514; Richmond, O.P. 'A post-liberal peace: Eireanism and the everyday', *Review of International Studies*, 35:3 (2009) pp. 557–580; Richmond, O.P. 'Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3:3 (2009) pp. 324–344; Richmond, O.P. 'Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 38:3 (2010) pp. 665–692; Richmond, O.P. 'Critical agency'; Richmond, O.P. 'De-romanticising the local, de-mystifying the international: hybridity in Timor Leste

the concept of hybridity in order to counter the “overcoming hegemonic narratives of conflict and internationally supported peace interventions” and break with the reification and fixity of categories and concepts implied by such narratives.⁹² He also argues that hybridity is useful to emphasise local agency and norms that have so far been romanticised within peacebuilding and statebuilding theory and practice. According to him, this concept allows us to question the kind and quality of peace that is promoted by liberal agents and look for alternative ways of building a better peace.⁹³ Mac Ginty argues that hybrid peace results from the interplay of four factors: the compliance powers of liberal peace agents, networks, and structures; the incentivising powers of liberal peace agents, networks, and structures; the ability of local actors to resist, ignore, or adapt liberal peace interventions; and the ability of local actors, networks, and structures to present and maintain alternative forms of peacemaking.⁹⁴ Similarly, several authors deploy the concept of hybridity or hybrid political orders as an alternative to the discourse on ‘failed’ states and fragility. They argue that the concept of hybridity is broad enough to incorporate the wide variety of non-state actors, forms, and orders that characterise post-conflict spaces.⁹⁵ According to Boege *et al.*, hybridity ‘focuses on the combination of elements that stem from genuinely different societal sources that follow different logics; and it affirms that these spheres permeate each other and, consequently, give rise to a different and genuine political order’.⁹⁶ In these hybrid political orders, the state does not have the privilege position as the hegemonic political framework that it enjoys in Western consolidated states. On the contrary, the state shares authority, sovereignty and legitimacy with other actors. For this reason, Boege *et al.* discard the state as the main unit of analysis. Finally, they argue that the concept of hybridity puts the emphasis on the positive potential of local actors and provides an opportunity to reflect on how to engage with local culture, traditions and institutions in a constructive way.⁹⁷ It therefore provides the tools to “identify and support processes of positive mutual accommodation between modern state institutions, customary local institutions and civil

and the Solomon Islands’, *The Pacific Review*, 24:1 (2011) pp. 115–136; Roberts, D. ‘Hybrid Polities and Indigenous Pluralities: Advanced Lessons in Statebuilding from Cambodia’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2:1 (2008) pp. 63–86;

⁹² Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*, p. 2.

⁹³ Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*, pp. 68-69.

⁹⁴ Mac Ginty, R. ‘Hybrid Peace’.

⁹⁵ Boege, V. et al. *On Hybrid Political Orders*; Boege, V. et al. ‘Building Peace’; Brown, M.A. et al. ‘States’;

⁹⁶ Boege, V. et al. ‘Building Peace’, p. 606.

⁹⁷ Boege, V. et al. ‘Building Peace’, p. 612.

society institutions which might lead to the emergence of new forms of sustainable statehood”.⁹⁸

While a simple definition of hybridity is used by MacGinty and Boege *et al.*,⁹⁹ Richmond has tried to give a more normative, prescriptive, and even sometimes philosophical content to this concept drawing on post-colonial theory and the work of Michel Foucault. For Richmond, hybridity is the outcome of the encounter between international liberal actors and local actors (“the infrapolitics of peacebuilding”¹⁰⁰ as he calls them). It is also the product of their capacity to engage with each other and the result of the interaction or clash between different forms of political organisations.¹⁰¹ This might be either in favour of local versions of peace or of liberal versions of peace.¹⁰² Hybridity is in practice already emerging and has the potential to give birth to a post-liberal peace, meaning a peace based on the everyday needs, culture, and welfare of local actors rather than on the norms, values, and institutions promoted by the liberal peace. In Richmond’s view, a focus on hybridity would give birth to a fourth generation of peace “that transcends the limitations of liberalism and aims for an empathetic and emancipatory form of peace”.¹⁰³ Contrary to the liberal peace, hybridity deterritorialises and emerges in “different ways and at different times in these polarised relations via local resistance, co-option and domination, or compliance and accommodation, between local and liberal forms of peacebuilding”.¹⁰⁴ Rather than producing subjects, a hybrid post-liberal peace enables subjects to produce peace.¹⁰⁵ In my view, the concept of hybridity oversimplifies the dynamics affecting post-conflict and conflict spaces and reifies them through a polarised opposition between local and international actors. It also fails to consider the national dynamics that characterise post-conflict spaces. More importantly, these authors do not actually explain how local actors are able to resist and challenge networks of power in post-conflict or conflict settings.

The critical peacebuilding literature has also explored the concept of the everyday as an attempt to propose theoretical alternatives to the liberal peace model and its failure to address local contexts. The basic argument is that a lasting peace has to rely on local actors’

⁹⁸ Brown, M.A. et al. 'States', p. 9.

⁹⁹ Boege, V. et al. *On Hybrid Political Orders*; Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*.

¹⁰⁰ Richmond, O.P. 'Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace', p. 689.

¹⁰¹ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, pp. 17 and 148.

¹⁰² Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 17.

¹⁰³ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰⁵ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 189.

everyday needs, identity, and culture rather than on liberal norms and institutions.¹⁰⁶ Richmond has written extensively on the 'everyday', to theorise an emancipatory peace based on a local-liberal hybridity which privileges the everyday needs and rights of citizens, as well as culture, identities, and local agencies rather than state security, state national interest, and free markets.¹⁰⁷ It is not easy to grasp at first sight what the everyday represents, as its meaning is heavily dependent on context. In the context of Western twentieth-century political and social theories, Western sociologists first used the concept of the everyday to analyse Western societies. In the literature about peacebuilding and statebuilding, the definition of the everyday given by Richmond and Mitchell is "the seemingly mundane, often repetitive activities through which human beings sustain their lives and social structures".¹⁰⁸ Mitchell gives a more detailed definition of the everyday, as the "set of experiences, practices and interpretations through which people engage with the daily challenges of occupying, preserving, altering and sustaining the plural worlds that they occupy".¹⁰⁹ Both these definitions point to the fact that the everyday is not a specificity of the local, although the literature on peacebuilding tends to focus on the everyday happening in local contexts and as opposed to liberal values and forms of power. For Richmond, the everyday is "a site of resistance, assimilation and adaptation, and of hidden agencies. It is also the site where power is often experienced in its most negative forms".¹¹⁰ He frames the everyday as a space of critical agency, a site where the local and the international, the liberal and the non-liberal 'meet and are negotiated, leading variously to repulsion, modification, or acceptance'.¹¹¹ Richmond claims that the literature on the everyday results in a need to theorise from the everyday context and those most affected. The politics of the everyday seeks to incorporate

¹⁰⁶ Antoniadou, A. 'Cave ! Hic Everyday Life : Repetition, Hegemony and the Social', *BJPIR*, 10, (2008) pp. 412–428; Darby, P. 'Rolling Back the Frontiers of Empire: Practising the Postcolonial', *International Peacekeeping*, 16:5 (2009) pp. 699–716; Hilhorst, D. and van Leeuwen, M. 'Grounding local peace organisations: a case study of southern Sudan', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43:4 (2005) pp. 537–563; Kappler, S. 'Everyday Legitimacy in Post-Conflict Spaces: The Creation of Social Legitimacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina's Cultural Arenas', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7:1 (2012) pp. 11–28; Lemay-Hébert, N. 'Everyday Legitimacy and International Administration: Global Governance and Local Legitimacy in Kosovo', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7:1 (2013) pp. 87–104; Mitchell, A. 'Quality/control: international peace interventions and "the everyday."' *Review of International Studies*, 37:4 (2011) pp. 1623–1645; Richmond, O.P. and Mitchell, A. (eds.) *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Roberts, D. 'Everyday Legitimacy and Postconflict States: Introduction', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7:1 (2012) pp. 1–10.; Robins, S. 'An Empirical Approach to Post-conflict Legitimacy: Victims' Needs and the Everyday', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7:1 (2012) pp. 45–64.

¹⁰⁷ Richmond, O.P. 'A post-liberal peace: Eireanism and the everyday'; Richmond, O.P. 'Becoming Liberal'; Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

¹⁰⁸ Richmond, O.P. and Mitchell, A. (eds.) *Hybrid Forms of Peace*.

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell, A. 'Quality/control', p. 1624.

¹¹⁰ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 128.

¹¹¹ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 141–142.

social and community contexts into peacebuilding methodology, epistemology, theory, and policy. These become a basis for the construction of an everyday peace, in part international and institutional, democratic, observing rights and needs, with a rule of law, and in part representative of local identity, custom, culture, institutions, and expectations. It reflects “local-local, and its transnational, transversal connections, including with the many agencies of the liberal peace, but also increasingly with those actors who are outside this consensus”.¹¹²

One of the contributions of the concepts of hybridity and the everyday is to emphasise the role of culture within peacebuilding at the local level. MacGinty argues that culture is intimately linked to local and traditional modes of conflict resolution. The principal advantage stemming from traditional and indigenous approaches to peacebuilding, he posits, lies in their culturally intuitive nature.¹¹³ Richmond builds on this perspective and argues that culture is marginalised in the current peacebuilding and statebuilding practices as well as in the related institutional, liberal, and neoliberal theories and their rights, security, and markets version. Culture has been ignored due to the problem-solving rights based approach to peacebuilding. Yet local cultures are at the basis of local actors’ social and economic systems, which he calls their cultural agency.¹¹⁴ Culture is therefore identified as instrumental to local actor’s agency and autonomy. Kappler showed that culture plays a role in the reconstruction of the social fabric of local communities affected by violence and in creating legitimate social orders.¹¹⁵ Woodhouse argues that culture has a role to play through its capacity to mobilise energies for sustainable peacebuilding at different stages of the conflict.¹¹⁶ Culture is therefore identified as instrumental to local actors’ agency and autonomy. But none of these scholars explain how culture could have an impact beyond the everyday realms and contexts of local actors.

While a focus on the everyday represents an improvement to liberal theories, it is not a useful tool to analyse local actors’ agencies. On the contrary, it reduces their agency to their capacity to influence their everyday environment. It does not say anything about how the concept of the everyday could challenge the structural constraints imposed by this same

¹¹² Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, pp. 141-142.

¹¹³ Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*, p. 55.

¹¹⁴ Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, pp. 44-46.

¹¹⁵ Kappler, S. 'Everyday Legitimacy'.

¹¹⁶ Woodhouse, T 'Peacekeeping, Peace Culture and Conflict Resolution', *International Peacekeeping*, 17:4 (2010) pp. 486–498.

environment. If we are to understand how local actors interact with these structural constraints and have an impact beyond their local environment, it is necessary to go beyond the everyday and the tactical realm. The crucial issue is not the need to rethink the concept of peace based on the everyday, but how to bring about social and political change at the everyday level. In this regard, the concept of the everyday does not say anything about local actors' capacities to challenge the material networks of power in which they evolve. It also discards broader historical dynamics in the analysis of post-conflict and conflict settings, a gap which the sociological approach to statebuilding¹¹⁷ tries to fill by advocating the need for a perspective that takes into account the *longue durée*.¹¹⁸

The sociological approach to statebuilding also illustrates my argument that we do not need to move away from the concepts used by liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, namely state and civil society, to replace them with other concepts such as hybridity or the everyday. On the contrary, what is required is a rethink of the concepts of state and civil society and how the two interact and mutually constitute each other in post-conflict and conflict spaces. The critical literature assumes that the rethink of the concept of peace based on the everyday and hybridity will lead to better peacebuilding and statebuilding practices. This is based on a moral or ethical perspective which does not consider the materiality of power that characterises post-conflict spaces. If we want to explain the transition from conflict to peace in an accurate way, we need a theory of social and political change that gives us the tools to explain and understand such a change. Instead of focusing on values, identities, and norms and conceptualising an ethical concept of peace, the emphasis should be placed on issues related to domination and hegemony, coercion and consent, state and civil society. Peace not only depends on values but also on material power relations and the struggle for power, be they social, political, or economic. Peace does not emerge from the everyday or the apolitical interaction between international and local norms and actors. Peace is the outcome of power struggles between rulers and the ruled. While the former try to maintain their domination, the latter resist and contest it.

¹¹⁷ Bliesemann de Guevara, B. 'Introduction: The Limits of Statebuilding and the Analysis of State-Formation', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 4:2 (2010) pp. 111–128; Bliesemann de Guevara, B. *Statebuilding and State-Formation*; Heathershaw, J. and Lambach, D. 'Introduction: Post-Conflict Spaces and Approaches to Statebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2:3 (2008) pp. 269–289;

¹¹⁸ Braudel, F. 'Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée', *Annales*, 13e Année: 4 (1958) pp. 725–753.

Power, agency, and strategies of non-violent movements

In this regard, the literature on civil resistance and non-violence provides useful insights about the concept of power, the autonomy and agency of resistance movements, and their strategies. Theories of civil resistance rest on a particular understanding of power according to which the sources of rulers' power depend on the obedience and cooperation of ruled subjects.¹¹⁹ In this regard, the coercive aspect of non-violent resistance is based on the removal of the adversary's key sources of power.¹²⁰ Such an understanding departs from conceptions of power as violence or coercion, has informed civil resistance campaigns and practice, and was coherently articulated by Sharp.¹²¹ This understanding of power has been used so far to explain how civil resistance campaigns were able to overthrow dictatorships, put an end to colonisation, or protest against non-democratic laws within formally democratic institutions and contexts. However, it has not been applied to contexts of civil wars where resistance is exerted not only against actors backed by state power but also against illegal armed actors. Although recent studies have shown that civilian institutions proved to be a critical factor for both explaining and limiting levels of violence,¹²² the majority of studies of civil resistance campaigns in contexts of civil wars is either descriptive or normative.¹²³ Similarly, while the clear majority of the literature on civil resistance has focused on instances where the overthrow of authoritarian power and its replacement by democratic or more legitimate actors was the main objective, the extent to which civil resistance theories are relevant for struggles against structural violence remains to be seen. There is reason to believe that local peasant communities in Colombia have had a positive impact on the direct

¹¹⁹ Ackerman, P. and Kruegler, C. *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT., Praeger Publishers, 1993); Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011); Martin, B. 'Gene Sharp's Theory of Power', *Journal of Peace Research*, 26:2 (1989) pp. 213–222.; Mcguinness, K. 'Gene Sharp's Theory of Power: A Feminist Critique of Consent', *Journal of Peace Research*, 30:1 (1993) pp. 101–115; Randle, M. *Civil Resistance* (Fontana Press, 1994); Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One: Power and Struggle* (Boston, Porter Sargent, 1973); Zunes, S. 'Unarmed insurrections against authoritarian Governments in of the Third World World : A New Kind of Revolution', *Third World Quarterly*, 15:3 (1994) pp. 403–426.

¹²⁰ Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M. *Why Civil Resistance Works*, p. 43.

¹²¹ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*; Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, Porter Sargent, 1973); Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Three: The dynamics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973).

¹²² Kaplan, O. 'Nudging Armed Groups: How Civilians Transmit Norms of Protection', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2:3 (2013) pp. 1–18; Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians'.

¹²³ Alther, G. 'Colombian peace communities'; Anrup, R. and Español, J. 'Una comunidad de paz en conflicto con la soberanía y el aparato judicial del estado', *Dialogos de Saberes*, 35 (2011) pp. 153–169; Arbeláez Rudas, M. 'Comunidades de Paz'; Burnyeat, G. 'On a Peak in Darien', pp. 435–445; Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado'; Mallarino, M.R. *Estrategias civiles en medio del conflicto: los casos de las comunidades de Paz y de Pensilvania* (Bogotá, Ediciones Uniandes, 2003).

violence they faced, but useful insights could be gained from a study of their struggle to build peace and challenge structural violence. Theories of civil resistance, in particular the theory of power underlying them, could complement peacebuilding theories. Indeed, the latter often rely on a structural and institutional understanding of the sources of power and rarely take into account the social sources of power.

In addition, civil resistance studies usually stress the influence of agency in bringing about political change. While Sharp's theory of power has been criticised for not taking into account structural constraints to power,¹²⁴ recent studies have tried to bridge the gap between structure and agency¹²⁵ and challenge more structural approaches coming from social movements studies.¹²⁶ Chenoweth and Stephan's central contention is that non-violent campaigns have a participation advantage over violent insurgencies, which is an important factor in determining campaign outcomes. According to them, "nonviolent campaigns facilitate the active participation of many more people than violent campaigns, thereby broadening the base of resistance and raising the costs to opponents of maintaining the status quo".¹²⁷ They argue that the failure of non-violent campaigns is best explained by their inability to overcome the challenge of participation, rather than by the power of structural factors. They find that this argument is valid independently of the structures or political opportunities faced by non-violent campaigns. Schock¹²⁸ analyses the interaction between political opportunities and strategic choices, and identifies key factors for explaining the outcome of civil resistance campaigns. In this regard, he argues that such concepts as mobilisation, resilience, leverage, tactical innovation, and the shifting between methods of concentration and methods of dispersion are instrumental for the success of non-violent campaigns. These studies represent attempts to understand how civil resistance campaigns can have a positive impact on national structures of power. However, they fail to provide a useful analytical framework for understanding movements that not only try to challenge political power, but also more global power structures.

¹²⁴ Martin, B. 'Gene Sharp's Theory of Power',

¹²⁵ Bleiker, R. *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); Bleiker, R. 'Discourse and Human Agency', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2 (2003) pp. 25–47.

¹²⁶ Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M. *Why Civil Resistance Works*; Schock, K. *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

¹²⁷ Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M. *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

¹²⁸ Schock, K. 'People Power and Political Opportunities: Social Movement Mobilization and Outcomes in the Philippines and Burma', *Social Problems*, 46:3 (1999) pp. 355–375; Schock, K. 'Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 36:4 (2003) pp. 705–712.; Schock, K. *Unarmed Insurrections*.; Schock, K. 'The practice and study of civil resistance', *Journal of Peace Research*, 50:3 (2013) pp. 277–290.

Finally, the study of strategies and techniques of non-violent actions has traditionally been one of the main focuses of the literature on civil resistance, with a focus on the dynamics of non-violent strategies¹²⁹ and the effectiveness of such strategies.¹³⁰ New studies have also analysed how these strategies are shaped by or embedded in cultural elements.¹³¹ But the study of non-violent strategies can also be linked to peacebuilding. Indeed, some studies have shown that the outcomes achieved through non-violent means are likely to lead to peaceful settlements and be more permanent than those achieved through violence.¹³² It has also been argued that the changing nature of war and conflict throughout the twentieth century has created new opportunities for non-violent strategies to bring about peace through molecular processes.¹³³ The literature on civil resistance and non-violence therefore provides useful insights for the study of the capacity of local actors to challenge power structures, their agency, and their strategies. As Jackson argues, a focus on resistance could palliate some of the flaws of peacebuilding studies.¹³⁴ Such a focus would entail a serious engagement with the concept of power and its complex nature, as well as a stronger critical engagement with neoliberal capitalism and historical materialist theories of class and state power.¹³⁵ It would also put the emphasis on the concept of structural violence that was key to early peace studies.¹³⁶ Finally, it has the potential to re-focus attention away from high-level elites, public officials and top-down macro-level processes, towards local actors, local agency and more bottom-up, societal processes.¹³⁷

Conclusion

¹²⁹ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*; Sharp, G. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston, Porter Sargent, 2005).

¹³⁰ Ackerman, P. and Kruegler, C. *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*.

¹³¹ Chabot, S., Vinthagen, S. 'Rethinking nonviolent action and contentious politics: Political cultures of nonviolent opposition in the Indian independence movement and Brazil's landless workers' movement', *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, 27, (2007) pp. 91–121; Reed, J.-P. and Foran, J. 'Political cultures of opposition: Exploring idioms, ideologies, and revolutionary agency in the case of Nicaragua', *Critical Sociology*, 28:3 (2002) pp. 335–370.

¹³² Chenoweth, E. and Stephan, M. *Why Civil Resistance Works*; Dudouet, V. 'Nonviolent Resistance in Power Asymmetrie', in *Advancing conflict transformation*, edited by Austin, B. et al. (Opladen and Farmington Hills, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011) pp. 237-264.

¹³³ Schell, J. *The Unconquerable World* (London, Penguin Books, 2003).

¹³⁴ Jackson, R. 'How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies', *Journal of Resistance Studies*, 1:1 (2015) p. 31.

¹³⁵ Jackson, R. 'How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies', p. 31.

¹³⁶ Jackson, R. 'How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies', p. 32.

¹³⁷ Jackson, R. 'How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies', p. 34.

Authors such as Lederach,¹³⁸ Rupesinghe,¹³⁹ Nordstrom,¹⁴⁰ Boulding,¹⁴¹ and Pearce¹⁴² have all insisted on local actors' capacities to build peace. However, these grassroots and bottom-up initiatives have failed so far to have an impact at national level by challenging power structures that sustain violence and armed conflicts. The different strands of the peacebuilding literature have tried to find solutions to the gap between local actors and international peacebuilding interventions. In its attempt to save liberal peacebuilding, the mainstream literature has tried to develop a cosmopolitan model of global governance within which a cosmopolitan human rights agenda is consistent with the communitarian defence of political autonomy and cultural diversity. The critical strand of the literature offers a new conceptualisation of the local and argues that the concepts of hybridity and the everyday should be used as the basis of a more sustainable and just peace, if the 'local' is to be emancipated. What is needed, though, is a detailed understanding of how local actors can build on their culture, interests, and needs in order to challenge the roots of their domination and alienation, and challenge power structures. The literature on non-violence and resistance is therefore useful, as it challenges the assumption, which underlies both the liberal and critical strand of the peacebuilding literature, that peace requires management or intervention. In this regard, Jackson argues that resistance studies can 'save peace studies', by refocusing the field on 'the role of power dynamics in conflict and peace'.¹⁴³ Emancipation requires political struggles, not a new conceptualisation of peace or what the local means. It also requires a recentring of the analysis towards the national dynamics of peacebuilding processes. Such a recentring is also coherent with calls to consider "peacebuilding as essentially local"¹⁴⁴ and with the insights of early peace and conflict resolution scholars who promoted a holistic and bottom-up perspective. Leonardsson and Rudd show that the common denominator of this perspective "is the emphasis on a peace built on internal, domestic and local traditions as well as cultural practices. Outside actors can lend valuable

¹³⁸ Lederach, J.P. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, (Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1995); Lederach, J.P. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); Lederach, J.P. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2010).

¹³⁹ Rupesinghe, K. *Conflict transformation* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹⁴⁰ Nordstrom, C. *A different kind of war story*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

¹⁴¹ Boulding, E. *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

¹⁴² Pearce, J. 'Sustainable Peace-Building in the South: Experiences from Latin America', *Development in Practice*, 7:4 (1997) pp. 438–455.

¹⁴³ Jackson, R. 'How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies', p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ De Coning, C. 'Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local'.

support but are never more than bystanders in decisions on what type of peace is to be built".¹⁴⁵ Finally, Pearce has shown the problems associated with externally funded and supported peacebuilding.¹⁴⁶ These considerations have led me to identify the political theory of the Italian activist and thinker Antonio Gramsci as offering the most useful tools in this regard, as I explain in more details in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁵ Leonardsson, H. and Rudd, G. 'The " local turn " in peacebuilding'.

¹⁴⁶ Pearce, J. 'Sustainable Peace-Building in the South'; Pearce, J. 'Building Civil Society from the Outside: The Problematic Democratisation of Central America', *Global Society*, 12:2 (1998) pp. 177–196; Pearce, J. 'Is social change fundable? NGOs and theories and practices of social change', *Development in Practice*, 20:6 (2010) pp. 621–635.

Chapter 2: Gramsci's Politics in the Context of Armed Conflicts

Introduction

As argued in the previous section, research on peacebuilding and statebuilding is deeply embedded within a liberal and neoliberal framework of analysis, although a critical strand within this literature has been growing. Given the failure of peacebuilding and statebuilding policies and the incapacity of the literature to go beyond critique of these policies in spite of some recent very interesting efforts,¹⁴⁷ there is a need to overcome the dead-end at which the literature has arrived and to bring in a new perspective. The previous chapter addressed the reasons why theoretical frameworks based on the concepts of hybridity and the everyday, analyses relying on a liberal understanding of civil society, and Zones of Peace and Local Peace Committee approaches are not analytically useful to fully understand how local peacebuilding actors can challenge power. There is a need to explain why peacebuilding agreements are often pressed into conservative projects which preserve the *status quo* and do not address the roots causes of conflict.

Within International Relations (IR), the application of Gramsci's concepts has traditionally been limited to the sub-discipline of International Political Economy (IPE). More recently, however, debates have focused on their explanatory power when applied to the international level and on their historical and contemporary relevance. In this context, calls have been made to introduce Gramsci's concepts to other IR fields. Although Gramsci's ideas – and Marxist thought in general – have been applied to the popular struggles that have characterised Latin America in the second-half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century,¹⁴⁸ these studies have not explicitly or directly related to peace and

¹⁴⁷ Mac Ginty, R. *International Peacebuilding*; Mitchell, A. *Lost in Transformation: Violent Peace and Peaceful Conflict in Northern Ireland*, (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Richmond, O.P. *A Post-Liberal Peace*.

¹⁴⁸ Freeland, A. 'The Gramscian Turn: Readings from Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia', *A contra corriente*, 11:2 (2014) pp. 278-301; Hesketh, C. 'From passive revolution to silent revolution: Class forces and the production of state, space and scale in modern Mexico', *Capital & Class*, 34:3 (2010) pp. 383–407; Hesketh, C. 'The Clash of Spatializations: Geopolitics and Class Struggles in Southern Mexico', *Latin American Perspectives*, 40:4 (2012) pp. 70–87; Hesketh, C. and Morton, A.D. 'Spaces of Uneven Development and Class Struggle in Bolivia: Transformation or Transformismo?' *Antipode*, 46:1 (2014) pp. 149–169; Modonesi, M. *Subalternity, Antagonism, Autonomy: Constructing the Political Subject*, (London, Pluto Press, 2013); Morton, A.D. 'Structural change and neoliberalism in Mexico: "Passive revolution" in the global political economy', *Third World Quarterly*, 24:4 (2003) pp. 631–653; Morton, A.D. 'Change within continuity: The political economy of democratic transition in Mexico', *New Political Economy*, 10:2 (2005) pp. 181–202; Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*; Portantiero, J.C. *Los usos de Gramsci* (Mexico, Flios Ediciones, 1981); Suárez, H. (ed.) *Antonio Gramsci y la realidad colombiana* (Bogotá, Ediciones Foro Nacional por Colombia, 1991); Zavaleta, R. *La autodeterminación de las masas*, Compilador Luis Tapia (Bogotá, Siglo del Hombre Editores y CLACSO, 2009).

conflicts, with one notable exceptions.¹⁴⁹ Other studies applied Gramsci's political theory to context of statebuilding and post-war reconstruction.¹⁵⁰ This chapter explores the relevance of Gramsci's thought for the study of war-torn societies in relation to peacebuilding and state formation processes, especially for the role of local actors within these processes, building on the example of Colombia. It analyses the explanatory power of Gramsci's concept in relation to resistance to armed conflict, the state, and neoliberalism in Colombia, where internally displaced peasants have formed "peasant communities" to both protect themselves and build peace. A close look at the struggles of these communities through a Gramscian lens takes us deep into the superstructures of the armed conflict and reveals its political, social, and cultural dynamics.

This chapter then moves away from the peacebuilding and statebuilding literature to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of the role of local actors' peace initiatives based on a particular understanding of the concepts deployed by the Italian political theorist and activist Antonio Gramsci. I use Gramsci's concepts to think about non-violent resistance and local peace building initiatives in the context of the Colombian armed conflict and its resolution. I argue that Gramsci's spatial awareness, historical sociological approach, and reflections on the relationship between dominant and dominated groups prove useful tools for thinking about such communities, conflicts, and peacebuilding processes, and for explaining their outcomes. In particular, it proves to be a useful tool to understand both the processes and structures of social and political conflicts (hegemonic struggles and the conditions of emergence and reproduction of hegemony, historical blocs) on one hand, and the outcome of these conflicts in terms of revolution/transformation/conservation (hegemony, passive revolution, transformism, Ceasarism) on the other. Such an approach draws attention to the interplay between the counter-hegemonic projects of local actors' peace initiatives and the hegemonic projects and strategies of ruling groups. This approach also frames these struggles within the broader social structures that condition and inform them. These structures contribute to the reproduction or conservation of a given social order as well. In other words, Gramsci's thought represents a useful theory of social and political

¹⁴⁹ Short, N. *The International*.

¹⁵⁰ Bridoux, J. *American Foreign Policy and Postwar Reconstruction: Comparing Japan and Iraq*, (Oxon, Routledge, 2011); Dodge, T. 'The Sardinian, the Texan and the Tikriti: Gramsci, The Comparative Autonomy of the Middle Eastern State and Regime Change in Iraq', *International Politics*, 43:4 (2006) pp. 453–473; Dodge, T. 'Coming face to face with bloody reality: Liberal common sense and the ideological failure of the Bush doctrine in Iraq', *International Politics*, 46:2–3 (2009) pp. 253–275.

change in which human agency is awarded the ability to influence its environment without ever losing sight of the economic structures. His ideas can be conceived as a network of concepts which are dialectically related and historically grounded. Concepts such as hegemony, the historical bloc, passive revolution, war of position, war of movement, and organic and traditional intellectuals, are all linked to one another and Gramsci uses them to analyse what he calls the ‘ensemble of social relations’¹⁵¹.

By focusing on the relationship between cultural, political, and ideological factors on one hand (the superstructures), and the economy (the structure) on the other, Gramsci’s concepts give us a good understanding of social and political change without losing sight of the material conditions that underlie these changes, while avoiding any economic determinism at the same time. Throughout this chapter, I will defend the five following assertions:

1. First, Gramsci’s non-deterministic yet structurally grounded theory of social and political change is useful to think about the relationship and struggles between subaltern groups and ruling groups within a global historical materialist perspective.
2. Second, it provides a historical-materialist theoretical framework that stresses the voluntarist elements (human agency) without losing sight of the structure (the economy). In this regard, it helps reflect on the transformative capacity of human beings, on the power of the ‘powerless’ and their strategies, as hegemony is located within the process of social reproduction and transformation. This structural location places constraints on actors but also leaves them room for the possibility of constructing new hegemonic projects and formations or historical blocs.¹⁵²
3. Third, his concepts of the integral state and civil society provide a useful alternative to the liberal versions of these concepts in order to understand how social, economic and political change occurs. It allows me to look beyond the state understood in a Weberian and institutional form, without taking the state out of the picture. A focus on hegemony draws attention to how state power is constructed, exerted, and maintained instead of focusing on state failure. The

¹⁵¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*.

¹⁵² Joseph, J. *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis* (London, Routledge., 2002).

armed conflict in Colombia symbolises not only a crisis of state but a crisis of hegemony. While the absence of state control in some regions explains why illegal groups can operate, most of the violence is committed by state-sponsored paramilitary groups or the state itself.

4. Fourth, Gramsci's spatial awareness emphasises uneven development and on the connections between local, national, and international dynamics as well. This parallels the uneven presence and power of the state within war-torn societies and Colombia in particular, and the uneven impact of the capitalist mode of production as well.
5. Fifth, Gramsci makes the link between the political and cultural realm of everyday life and struggles for hegemony at the national-popular realm. Gramsci explains how everyday life and culture can be mobilised to go beyond their local spaces and reach a universal, ethico-political stage.

In what follows, I first explain in broad terms the meaning of Gramsci's concepts and show their relevance for the study of local actors' peace initiatives, such as peasant communities in Colombia. Then, I discuss the epistemological and methodological grounds on which the application of these concepts to civil war settings in general, and Colombia in particular, rests. Finally, I conclude by laying the groundwork for the empirical case-studies that follow, discussing Gramsci's own criteria for the study of subaltern groups and engaging with issues of consciousness, autonomy, power, and political and social change.

Hegemony, resistance, and social change

Hegemony, state, and civil society

Gramsci's theory of hegemony emphasises the ruling class's use of strategies to gain consent of subaltern groups to preserve a given social structure. Hegemonic social groups exert both domination and intellectual and moral leadership.¹⁵³ Gramsci explains how dominant groups achieve leadership and exert power through the development of social cohesion and consensus within society. Indeed, the position of dominant groups and the degree of consent they achieve is never guaranteed. Rather, it requires the design, construction, and implementation of political projects and social alliances, or historical blocs. These projects

¹⁵³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 57.

and alliances, with the help and mediation of organic intellectuals, those linked to a given social group and who ensure the cohesion and unity of both the ruling elites and the social whole. In other words, they ensure its hegemony over the rest of society. In this regard, while the concept of hegemony was used in reference to contingent situations before Gramsci, with Gramsci the concept becomes key in understanding how the unity of 'the ensemble of social relations' is achieved and maintained.¹⁵⁴

Gramsci's concept of hegemony thus draws attention to the dialectic between coercion and consent and between rulers and the ruled in the formation of social and political orders. Hegemony unites in a dialectical way the moments of force and consent, domination and direction (*dominazione e direzione*), state and civil society. Gramsci's 'dual perspective' on power implies that "the more the first 'perspective' is 'immediate' and elementary, the more the second has to be 'distant' (not in time, but as a dialectical relation)". At the individual level, this means that "the more an individual is compelled to defend his own immediate physical existence, the more will he uphold and identify with the highest values of civilisation and of humanity".¹⁵⁵ This echoes peasant communities' use of a human rights discourse to defend their life and territory.

Hegemony refers to the construction of consent through and beyond the state and civil society. Gramsci therefore emphasises the fact that social cohesion must be actively constructed, preserved, and reproduced through political, social, and cultural means. It does not automatically flow from the working of the economy. This perspective is helpful to understand why liberal and neoliberal peacebuilding and statebuilding fail to achieve a sufficient level of consent by neglecting the political, social, and cultural dimensions of such processes. Peace will not automatically flow from economic measures or technocratic policies aiming at strengthening the state. On the contrary, peacebuilding is a political process in which a struggle is fought over what the state should be and should do, over the nature of society and the citizens that compose it, and over the economic structure.

At the centre of Gramsci's theory of hegemony lies the concept of historical bloc. I argue that peace processes and the struggles that are an integral part of their dynamics can be considered as attempts to constitute new and alternative historical blocs. For Gramsci,

¹⁵⁴ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London, Verso, 2001) p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 170.

“structures and superstructures form an ‘historical bloc’. That is to say ‘the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures is the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations of production”.¹⁵⁶ Gramsci implies here that for the domination of a ruling group to be hegemonic, it must rely on both force and consent. Gramsci also uses the concept of historical bloc in a second way to refer to relationships between social class forces. As Morton argues (Morton, 2007: 119), the notion of historical bloc directs “attention to which social-class forces may have been crucial in the formation of a historical bloc or particular state”.¹⁵⁷ In this regard, the concept of historical bloc stresses the influence and impact of social-class struggles on state formation where states evolve in alternative conditions of development. This is coherent with Gramsci’s concept of the state as being constituted by both political society and civil society. The concept of historical bloc also emphasises the potential for resistance to hegemony. Although the economic structure determines the framework of action of individuals, “the political process remains open because of the various strategies and courses of action available to social-class forces struggling for hegemony”. This potential for counter-hegemony is related to Gramsci’s thinking about the strategies of subaltern classes, analysed later in this chapter.

The dual and dialectical dimensions of hegemony and power are also reflected in Gramsci’s concept of the integral state understood as both political society and civil society, which include both the ethical-political and repressive functions of the state, “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion”.¹⁵⁸ The state is therefore not merely associated with the monopoly of legitimate violence. According to Gramsci, the apparatus of state coercive power is constituted “for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent had failed”.¹⁵⁹ Gramsci conceives of the state as one point within a web of social relations of power, embedded within political and civil society, while being at the same time a “concrete form of a productive world”.¹⁶⁰ This leads Gramsci to affirm that civil society and the state are one and the same,¹⁶¹ by which he means that civil society and its private associations constitute ‘the hegemonic apparatus of one social group over the rest of the population (or civil society): the basis for the State in the

¹⁵⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 366

¹⁵⁷ Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 263.

¹⁵⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 117.

¹⁶¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 261.

narrow sense of the governmental-coercive apparatus'.¹⁶² Gramsci also shows how the ruling class asserts its hegemony through the private organisms of civil society: 'The State does have and request consent, but it also 'educates' this consent, by means of the political and synodical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class'.¹⁶³ But the hegemony of a ruling groups depends in the last instance on the economic structure.¹⁶⁴

Such a conception of the state shows how state power operates within the "ensemble of social relations"¹⁶⁵, and moves away from traditional perspectives on state institutions as the locus of such power. According to Short, "The notion of 'state power' is thus related to the nature of the relationship between the dominant or ruling elements of the 'ensemble of social relations' and the subaltern elements, a question of political subjectivity and legitimacy."¹⁶⁶ Such a conception of the state has also been used by a very interesting strand of Colombian academic literature in order to analyse the relationships between the armed conflict and state formation.¹⁶⁷ This is useful to address what Gonzalez has identified as one of the main difficulties for the understanding of the armed conflict in Colombia. He argues that the vast majority of the conceptual categories available for political analyses tend to dilute politics into the state and to establish a sharp separation between state and society.¹⁶⁸ My contention is that Gramsci's political theory allows me to solve this problem.

For Gramsci, intellectuals are the key agents in charge of organising social hegemony and state domination – consent and coercion – and ensuring the cohesion of the social whole, historical blocs, and state power. The best known of Gramsci's characterisation of intellectuals is his distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals. The term organic refers to the fact that intellectuals or the ideologies they diffuse have the specific functions of ensuring the homogeneity between structure and superstructures on one hand, and organising human masses and the terrain on which they move on the other. But it also refers to the fact that organic intellectuals are organically linked to a particular social group. In other

¹⁶² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 264-265.

¹⁶³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 259.

¹⁶⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 263.

¹⁶⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 366.

¹⁶⁶ Short, N. *The International Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Guatemala* (PhD thesis) p. 46.

¹⁶⁷ González, F.E. et al. *Violencia política en Colombia. De la nación fragmentada a la construcción del Estado* (Bogotá, Cinep, 2003); González, F.E. (ed.) *Hacia la Reconstrucción del País: Desarrollo, Política y Territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado* (Bogotá, Cinep-Odecofi, 2008); González, F.E. *Poder y violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá, Odecofi-CINEP, 2014); González, F.E. et al. *Conflicto y territorio en el oriente colombiano* (Bogotá, Odecofi-CINEP, 2012).

¹⁶⁸ González, F.E. *Poder*, p. 58.

words, they directly emerge from this group and ‘give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function, not only in the economic but also in the social and political field’.¹⁶⁹ By traditional intellectuals, Gramsci refers to intellectuals who emerged out of past economic structures and seem to ‘represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms’. Priests, teachers, clerks, or men of letters fall within this category.¹⁷⁰ This apparent neutrality or autonomy of traditional intellectuals is, however, a “social utopia”, because they also have a social-political function within society.¹⁷¹

Probably more important than the distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals is Gramsci’s insistence on this very social-political function of intellectuals, be they organic or traditional.¹⁷² In this regard, the relationship between intellectuals and the economic structure is not as direct as it is between a particular social group and the current social relations of production. This relationship is “in varying degrees, ‘mediated’ by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures”¹⁷³. Gramsci therefore argues that intellectuals are the “functionaries” of these superstructures.¹⁷⁴ This point is critical to understanding the function of intellectuals regarding the hegemony of a particular social group. Intellectuals are “the organisers of society”.¹⁷⁵ They organise the “social hegemony and state domination”¹⁷⁶ of the ruling class, in the sense that they ensure coherency and cohesion between economic-corporate interests and superstructures. They are therefore connected to the formation of hegemony or counter-hegemony by social class forces in their attempts to maintain a specific social order or create an alternative order. In this regard, intellectuals are necessary for the maintenance of a specific mode of production and for the social foundation of the hegemony of the ruling class. They have a crucial role in the making of historical blocs. Chapter 4 addresses this theme in more detail.

From the organising social-political function of intellectuals, Gramsci reaches two conclusions. He first refutes the existence of socially and politically neutral intellectuals. This is something we should keep in mind in the analysis of social movements: “There does not

¹⁶⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 8.

¹⁷² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 14 and p. 97.

¹⁷³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶

exist any independent class of intellectuals, but every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals, or tends to form one".¹⁷⁷ In other words, intellectuals are not an autonomous and independent social group.¹⁷⁸ Second, Gramsci insists that this social-political function, and therefore the distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, is not defined by the "intrinsic nature of intellectual activities", but by "the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations".¹⁷⁹ This means that seemingly non-intellectuals in the sense of the term might qualify as intellectuals for Gramsci, such as a worker, an entrepreneur, or a state official.¹⁸⁰ Gramsci thus argues:

All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals. When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort.¹⁸¹

In relation to counter-hegemonic struggles, the need to create "a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development".¹⁸² This same intellectual activity, itself part of a general practical activity, has to be oriented towards "a new equilibrium" in order to become "the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world".¹⁸³ The activities of organic intellectuals are therefore intimately linked to the rise in consciousness of a particular social group, in that these intellectuals are key to the organisation of the latter as they establish a link between theory and practice.¹⁸⁴

Finally, Gramsci stresses the importance, for any social group that wishes to counter the hegemony of another social group, of getting the support of the traditional intellectuals: "One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals."¹⁸⁵ However Gramsci argues that "this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously

¹⁷⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 8.

¹⁸¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 9.

¹⁸² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 9.

¹⁸³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 134.

¹⁸⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 10.

elaborating its own organic intellectuals".¹⁸⁶ The extent to which peasant communities manage to develop their own organic intellectuals is key to their success.

To conclude this section, it is important to say a few words on structural and agential aspects of hegemony, as peasant communities are not only resisting concrete political and economic projects but also the structural conditions imposed on them by armed conflict and neoliberalism. Joseph draws attention to the importance of considering both the conditions in which hegemony emerges and operates on one hand, and its materiality on the other. A theory of hegemony must therefore look at the agential dimension of hegemonic struggles, but it must also locate this struggle within concrete social structures.¹⁸⁷ The structural aspect of hegemony is concerned with social reproduction of structures, whereas the agential dimension represents conscious hegemonic projects and strategies.¹⁸⁸ In other words, the outcome of social and political struggles is not only determined by the relationship between dominant and subaltern groups, but by the social structures in which these struggles take place. This points to ways in which structures and agents interact and mutually constitute each other. Agents do not consciously create structures but contribute to their transformation and reproduction, while structures condition the strategies available to agents.¹⁸⁹ It is to these strategies that I now turn.

The potential for change: war of position and war of manoeuvre

Gramsci's ideas are also useful to think about local actors' strategies in the context of civil armed conflict. His concepts of war of position and war of manoeuvre are relevant for the analysis of counter-hegemonic and anti-passive revolution movements. They draw our attention to the dynamics of political struggles taking place within conditions of hegemony or passive revolution, and to the strategies employed within these struggles as well, while linking at the same time these dynamics and strategies to the political structures in which these struggles take place. For Burgos, Gramsci offers a theory of social transformation whose logic is the construction of new centres of power within society.¹⁹⁰ He provides us with a useful alternative to theories of revolution understood as a simple assault on the ruling class's

¹⁸⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Jessop, B. *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in Its Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

¹⁹⁰ Burgos, R. 'The Gramscian Intervention in the Theoretical and Political Production of the Latin American Left,' *Latin American Perspectives*, 29:122 (2002) pp. 9-37.

power. Instead, revolution is conceived as the slow conquest of centres of power and influence within civil society to gain predominance over political society.

Gramsci first developed the concept of war of position with the aim of designing an adequate strategy for the Communist party within modern European states. This is done based on a distinction between the nature of the state or political power in the East, where the war of manoeuvre was successfully applied in 1917 in Russia, and in the West where a war of position was the only form possible and “where the social structures were of themselves still capable of becoming heavily-armed fortifications”:¹⁹¹

The fundamental task was a national one; that is to say it required a reconnaissance of the terrain and identification of the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society, etc. In the East the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortress and earthworks.¹⁹²

According to Gramsci, the need for more complex and long-term strategies, in other words the need for a war of position, is then required to confront modern states:

The massive structures of the modern democracies, both as State organisations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the ‘trenches’ and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position: they render merely ‘partial’ the element of movement which before used to be ‘the whole’ of war, etc.¹⁹³

The existence of civil society and the predominance of the moment of consent over the moment of force are then necessary conditions for the success of a war of position.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the concept of war of position is considered by Gramsci to be the decisive moment in politics. It corresponds to the moment of consent and is being fought on the terrain of civil society or hegemony.¹⁹⁵

To determine whether the explanatory power of the concept of war of position can be extended to contexts of civil wars, it is necessary to remind, as I have already mentioned, the theoretical basis of the concept of war of position. The latter indeed finds its origin in an analysis of the nature of state power and the political power by which the dominance of the ruling class is assured. This is the nature of political power which ensures the possibility for a war of position to be successful. My analysis therefore needs to show the extent to which

¹⁹¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 237.

¹⁹² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 238.

¹⁹³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 243.

¹⁹⁴ Showstack S. *Gramsci's Politics* (London, Crom Helm, 1980) pp. 199-200.

¹⁹⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 239.

the Colombian state can be considered a modern state. In addition, the realm of politics is of crucial importance and is the decisive one, over military dynamics: “Politics, here too, must have priority over its military aspects and only politics creates the possibility for manoeuvre and movement”.¹⁹⁶ From these two theoretical assumptions on which the concept of war of position is based – namely, the superiority of the realm of politics and the nature of state and political power – it is possible to deduce that a war of position is possible in so far as the political process remains open and provides different opportunity to the subaltern groups to conduct a counter-hegemonic struggle. In a similar vein, if subaltern groups are to have a chance to win their struggle, they must conduct it on the very terrain which ensures the dominance of the ruling class and the power of the state. In Colombia, this terrain corresponds to the struggle over land. Therefore peasant communities’ strategies have such an important spatial dimension and aim at asserting their control over a given territory (Chapter 4). Gramsci has also developed concepts to think about how ruling groups maintain their domination over subaltern groups and counter the latter’s strategies. These are the concepts of passive revolution, transformism, and Ceasarism.

The dialectic of reproduction and transformation: passive revolution, transformism, and Ceasarism

The concept of passive revolution is one of the key concepts used by Gramsci to analyse social and political change in conditions of uneven development.¹⁹⁷ In this regard, it can be adequately applied to countries located at the periphery of the capitalist system. Gramsci himself argues that ‘the concept of passive revolution (...) applies not only to Italy but also to those countries that modernise the state through a series of reforms or national wars without undergoing a political revolution of a radical Jacobin-type’.¹⁹⁸ I argue that the concept of passive revolution is useful for the analysis of peacebuilding and statebuilding/formation processes. First of all, this concept frames political and social relations in terms of dialectic processes of revolution/restoration and points to the interaction between movements from below and movements from above.¹⁹⁹ Second, it is relevant for the understanding of the role

¹⁹⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 232.

¹⁹⁷ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America: Development, Hegemony, and Social Transformation*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁹⁸ Gramsci, A. *The Prison Notebooks*, Vol.2, ed. and trans. by Buttigieg, J.A. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), cited in Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*, p. 67.

¹⁹⁹ Cox, L. and Gunvald Nilsen, A. *We make our own history* (London, Pluto Press, 2014).

of the state within capitalist societies, to create and sustain conditions for the accumulation of capital. Third, it frames the resistance of local actors not only within the dynamics of the armed conflict but also in the *longue durée* of the state formation process and the reproduction of capitalist social relations. Finally, it focuses on the transitional state. Passive revolution becomes a potential tendency intrinsic to every transitional process. It therefore offers a theory of social change.

The concept of passive revolution refers to processes of revolution coming from above, generally through state intervention. The inclusion of subaltern groups demands under the domination of the ruling group but without awarding a real control over politics to these subaltern groups.²⁰⁰ When the state is leading and assuming the function and position of dominant groups, we deal with what Gramsci terms a “‘Piedmont’ type function in passive revolutions”. This refers to

[...] the fact that a State replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal. It is one of the cases in which these groups have the function of “domination” without that of “leadership”: dictatorship without hegemony. The hegemony will be exercised by a part of the social group over the entire group, and not by the latter over other forces in order to give power to the movement, radicalise it, etc. on the “Jacobin” model.²⁰¹

Change happens through small transformations which progressively contribute to bringing about a new political order.²⁰² We deal with a situation of passive revolution when the dominant political force manages to integrate and even absorb the opponents’ interests and claims to render them harmless for the system and structures. A new political order or state is established that suits the capitalist mode of production and social relations and does not affect profits made by owners of the means of production and capital. As Gramsci argues about the emergence of fascism in Italy,

There is a passive revolution involved in the fact that – through the legislative intervention of the State, and by means of the corporative organisation – relatively far-reaching modifications are being introduced into the country’s economic structure in order to accentuate the “plan of production” element; in other words, that socialisation and co-operation in the sphere of production are being increased, without however touching (or at least not going beyond the regulation and control of) individual and group appropriation of profit.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Showstack S. *Gramsci's Politics*, p. 210.

²⁰¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 105-106.

²⁰² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 109.

²⁰³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 119-120.

In this regard, it should be observed that although the concept of passive revolution may refer to a revolution from above without mass participation, it is also linked to popular mobilisation from below in a second sense. According to Gramsci, it refers to

The fact that 'progress' occurs as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses – a reaction consisting of 'restorations' that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore 'progressive restorations', or 'revolution-restorations', or even 'passive revolutions'.²⁰⁴

Gramsci illustrates this second sense when he describes the Risorgimento and other historical periods as passive revolution in contrast to the way the French Revolution managed to establish a new political and social order in a Jacobin-Napoleonic manner, when force prevailed.²⁰⁵

The passive aspect of passive revolutions consists in co-opting, cutting, or channelling the revolutionary potential of subaltern groups and popular initiatives. According to Showstack Sassoon's interpretation of passive revolution,

The acceptance of certain demands from below at the same time encouraging the working class to restrict its struggle to the economic-corporate terrain is part of this attempt to prevent the hegemony of the dominant class from being challenged at the same time as changes in the world of production are accommodated within the current social formation.²⁰⁶

Showstack Sassoon furthermore states that "when the bourgeoisie is ascendant, the 'passive' aspect of its political revolution has to do with the molecular transformation of the old traditional classes and any relatively more progressive ones." For her, "the revolution consists in the establishment of a new State, or a political superstructure generally suited to the eventual dominance of the capitalist mode of production".²⁰⁷ Passive revolution is in this sense a technique employed by the ruling class when its hegemony is threatened or in contexts where there was no hegemonic domination. Modifications to the social, economic, and political system are introduced in a situation of "domination without that of 'leadership': dictatorship without hegemony".²⁰⁸

Gramsci's concept of passive revolution avoids falling into the trap of structural functionalism and gives the possibility to account for social change and power struggles. The dialectic character of passive revolution presupposes the existence of a "vigorous antithesis

²⁰⁴ Gramsci, A. *The Prison Notebooks*, Vol.3, ed. and trans. by Buttigieg, J.A. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 252, cited in Morton, A.D. 'The continuum of passive revolution', *Capital & Class*, 34:3 (2010), p. 318.

²⁰⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 119.

²⁰⁶ Showstack S. *Gramsci's Politics*, p. 207.

²⁰⁷ Showstack S. *Gramsci's Politics*, p. 210.

²⁰⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 105-106.

which can present intransigently all the potentialities for development”.²⁰⁹ This puts the emphasis on the contradictions of revolution/restoration and the role of subaltern groups in shaping the content and form of social relations, the state, and the material conditions underlying the latter. The concept of passive revolution applied to countries undergoing peacebuilding transitions therefore allows us to point to the dynamics of revolution/restoration that characterise peace and statebuilding processes. On the other hand, the concept of passive revolution can also be considered as a theory of the survival and reorganisation of state identity through which social relations are reproduced in new forms consonant with capitalist property relations.²¹⁰ The Colombian president’s strategy can be interpreted in such a way, as is shown in the last chapter of this thesis. However, in line with Callinicos’s critique of the concept of passive revolution,²¹¹ we should not fall into the trap of overstressing this concept and characterise any kind of restructuring process as passive revolution. Passive revolution should indeed only be applied to processes through which systemic transformations are achieved through non-revolutionary means. This is the only way to avoid the risk of overstressing the concept, which would then just become “another way of referring to the dynamism and flexibility of capitalism”.²¹² In the case of Colombia, revolutionary outbreaks or progressive demands have always been kept in check. This refers to the second sense in which Gramsci uses passive revolution in which the state incorporates subaltern groups’ progressive or even revolutionary demands into a conservative project of restoration. The peacebuilding process in Colombia is part of such a conservative project combining elements of reform and restoration together, which envisages systemic changes regarding land ownership. While former president Alvaro Uribe Velez put the emphasis on the use of coercion, current president Juan Manuel Santos continues this project through consensual means in order to achieve a full hegemony.

Trasformismo is the second of the three historical forms corresponding to processes of revolution-restoration. It broadly refers to the absorption of opposition forces within the leading political party in power, and the suppression of differences and contradiction between them. The government “set itself above and over the parties” leading to the disintegration of “their interests and activities within the permanent framework of the life

²⁰⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 114.

²¹⁰ Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*, p. 41.

²¹¹ Callinicos, A. 'The limits of passive revolution', *Capital & Class*, 34:3 (2010) pp. 491–507.

²¹² Callinicos, A. 'The limits of passive revolution', p. 505.

and interests of the nation and State”, and to a rupture of the bound between parties and the ‘broad masses’.²¹³ The first element of *trasformismo* is a process of “molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes”.²¹⁴ This refers to the incorporation of “individual political figures” belonging to the opposition or resistance into the governmental forces. The second element of *trasformismo* happens at the collective level of political parties, when entire groups of an opposition party pass over to the leading political party.²¹⁵ Such strategies of *trasformismo* are common in Colombia, through attempts to co-opt leaders of peasant communities and to divide resistance movements. Also, an important number of former leftist figures, even guerrilla members, now support conservative forces such as paramilitary groups or right-wing political parties.

Finally, the last moment symbolising a dynamic of revolution-restoration is defined by Gramsci as *Caesarism*. Such a phenomenon occurs when none of the competing political forces is in a position to defeat the other. Instead, their struggle and the equilibrium of forces in which they find themselves lead towards catastrophe and then mutual destruction. This is when another force, usually but not necessarily a “great ‘heroic’ personality”, intervenes to resolve the stalemate and arbitrate the struggle. *Caesarism* may be both reactionary or progressive, and political analysis needs to weigh which one of these elements predominates. What is relevant for my purpose in Gramsci’s concept of *Caesarism* is the way in which he relates the mechanism of the *Caesarist* phenomenon, i.e., force and coercion, to the stage of development of a given country. Within modern societies, police mechanisms prevail, whereas within pre-modern societies, the military use of force predominates: “modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system”.²¹⁶ This echoes Gramsci’s analyses about the relevance of wars of position and wars of manoeuvre in different contexts, and my reflections of these two strategies within violent settings. This distinction between modern and pre-modern does not have to be necessarily understood in a temporal sense. Power is uneven, as are the structures within which hegemonic struggles take place. In Colombia, in a context of armed conflict, the military use of force prevails in rural areas, whereas the police of society predominate in more urban areas. This can be observed after the failed peace

²¹³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 227.

²¹⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 109.

²¹⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 58

²¹⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 219-22.

process between President Andres Pastrana and the FARC in 2002. A Caesarist solution occurred when Alvaro Uribe Velez won the elections, putting an end to the stalemate in which the FARC and the government found themselves, and resorted to the use of military force against the FARC in the countryside, whereas police forces remained predominant within cities.

Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony and its associated concepts through an analysis of the history of state formation in Italy but also Europe in general. I have already established some parallels regarding the relevance of Gramsci's concepts for the Colombian context. However, it is legitimate to ask whether the application of Gramsci's political theory to a contemporary context of armed conflict in Latin America does not lead to overstretching the explanatory power of these concepts. This is this question and problem now addressed.

Gramsci's relevance for the study of war-torn societies

So far, the use of Gramsci within International Relations has been confined to the sub-discipline of International Political Economy (IPE), thanks to Cox's influential articles and monographs and the Italian school.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, recent debates have on the one hand called for a move away from state centrism and the application of Gramsci to traditional IPE themes and concerns, while others have advocated for the application of Gramsci's concepts to other, unexplored IR fields, such as conflict studies.²¹⁸ However, I do not think that this should be done by looking at post-modern strands of political theory and cultural studies, as Worth argues.²¹⁹ By taking the concept of hegemony and its associated concepts to a context of civil war, I move away from the traditional uses of the concept in cultural studies or IPE. First, cultural studies tended to focus on modern societies and privileged a more liberal reading of Gramsci that did not consider the fundamentally Marxist ideas and politics held and promoted by Gramsci himself. My empirical subject, civil resistance in contexts of armed conflict, draws attention to the role of violence and non-violence within hegemonic struggles, and within the formation of hegemonic projects and the making of historical blocs. It also

²¹⁷ Cox, R.W. 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 10:2 (1981) pp. 126–155; Cox, R.W. 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 12:2, (1983) pp. 162–175; Cox, R.W. *Production Power and World Order* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1987); Cox, R.W. *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²¹⁸ Worth, O. 'Recasting Gramsci in international politics', *Review of International Studies*, 37:1 (2011) pp. 388-389.

²¹⁹ Worth, O. 'Recasting'.

reminds us that violence is an inevitable tool used by dominant groups and the state to coerce dominated groups, especially where there is a hegemonic crisis and where the dominance of one group over the others relies heavily on coercion. In this regard, nowhere is the extent to which neoliberalism, the state, and its institutions continue to depend on violence more visible than in peripheral developing countries and war-torn societies, to which Colombia belongs. This fact seems to have been forgotten within developed countries, although the resistance movements born out of the 2008 economic crisis in continental Europe and the United States have directly experienced state violence over the past few years. In addition, within civil wars the fact that political struggles always have a military substratum appears clearly, as does the use of violence to coerce groups that do not consent and ensure control over a territory. As Gramsci deployed his concepts in contexts where the state monopoly on legal violence was established, even if not entirely consolidated, reflection on the explanatory power and limits of the application of Gramsci's concepts to violent settings is therefore required.

Second, IPE studies were concerned with how hegemony operates at the level of world orders and contributes to the formation of a transnational capitalist class. Here, my focus is on the national sphere, although external intervention does play a role in shaping and influencing the structures and form of hegemony and the strategies available to actors at national level. Peasant communities appeal to international solidarity. They are supported by international organisations, which in turn engage in dialogue and pressure the Colombian state to respect human rights norms and international laws. It is necessary to reflect on how this international support and these international norms fit within the formation of alternative historical blocs at national level, especially in the case of the CdPSJA, which heavily relies on actors and norms on an international scale in order to strengthen its autonomy. The resort to violence and coercion by the Colombian state is also conditioned by this international pressure, as are the actions of paramilitary groups. The FARC also benefits from international support, albeit covert, and ideas and norms promoted at international level have an impact on its behaviour, if the political cost of not respecting them is too high. Finally, the international dimension of the conflict cannot be overlooked. Therefore, close attention must be paid to how to account for and explain international intervention from a Gramscian perspective. But these two issues depend on a broader debate about the epistemological grounds regarding the use of Gramsci to think about North/South issues and peripheral

countries. I will start by discussing this debate before looking more closely at violence and international intervention.

Gramsci and the North/South question

Several studies have already applied Gramsci's political theory to a Latin American context and argued that it is possible to build on Gramsci's reflections on European "late" developing countries such as Italy, Spain, or Portugal, and on his analysis of North/South relations in the Mezzogiorno (Southern Italy). Morton argues that Gramsci's thought is relevant to the study of what we might term today as developing countries and North/South issues. According to Morton, the concerns expressed by Gramsci about processes of hegemony and passive revolution and his awareness of processes of capitalism and uneven development linked to the failure of state formation and hegemony in Italy represent a relevant starting point to the study of processes of state formation elsewhere in the world.²²⁰ In a similar vein, Munck argues that the struggle for hegemony is key to an understanding of development in Latin American countries.²²¹ He adds that Gramsci provides us with a useful set of concepts to deconstruct "the hegemonic imaginary of neoliberalism and to construct a counter-hegemonic culture". For that, his work "needs to be grounded in the reality of current popular struggles in Latin America and their aspiration to create a world beyond neoliberalism".²²² Finally, Short argues that Gramsci speaks to a non-European context thanks to his emphasis on difference and on how this difference can be made into a coherent social whole, forming a historical bloc that will ensure the hegemony of a dominant social group.²²³ In this regard, the use of Gramsci's thought not only gives me the opportunity to break with Western-centred conceptions of politics in general, but also with Western-centred analysis of war-torn societies in particular, and the peacebuilding and statebuilding policies targeting these same societies.

The question of whether Gramsci's concepts can be applied to different contexts and problems than those which pre-occupied Gramsci himself is not new and has usually been addressed on the basis of Gramsci's essay entitled *Some Aspects of the Southern Question*, in

²²⁰ Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*, p. 1.

²²¹ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 22.

²²² Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 15.

²²³ Short, N. *The International Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Guatemala* (PhD thesis).

which he appreciates the need for autonomous peasant politics and subjectivity.²²⁴ However, before writing this essay, Gramsci was already concerned with what he perceives as the “central problem of national life in Italy – the Southern problem”,²²⁵ and he deals extensively with issues related to the relationships between the industrial north and the rural south, between workers and peasants, and peasant mentalities in his pre-prison writings. Three themes emerge from his writings on the Southern question, which are directly relevant to my focus on peasant communities within a developing country: the need for an alliance between peasants and workers and the leading role of the proletariat within such an alliance; the relationship between cities and the countryside and the agrarian question as crucial factors for understanding the state formation process in Italy; and peasants’ consciousness and mentalities, and the need to overcome the lack of social cohesion within the ideological field.

In an essay on workers and peasants published in *L’Ordine Nuovo* in August 1919, Gramsci argues that the First World War brought about changes in peasant mentalities that the embryonic capitalist system failed to do. He affirms that a feudal mentality still survives in countries that “are still backward in capitalist terms”²²⁶. For this reason, economic and political institutions are seen as natural, perpetual, irreducible categories, and not as historical categories. The idea of the modern liberal-capitalist state is unknown and the state actually contributes to the reproduction of this feudal mentality. For Gramsci, this is why peasants cannot think of themselves as a class or part of a bigger whole. Therefore, they cannot have the capacity to challenge the broader structures of their domination.²²⁷

Peasants could not see further than their individual situation and give a “centralized expression to their aspirations and needs”.²²⁸ They also only engaged in limited defensive actions of relations against landowners that did not have any long-term impact. Peasant consciousness was “dependent upon the social conditions created by the democratic-parliamentary State”.²²⁹ In his essay on the Southern question, Gramsci further emphasises the social disintegration and lack of cohesion that characterise the South and the peasant masses. Big landowners and intellectuals dominate the South, and the ideological sphere is the most important field of this centralisation. For Gramsci, this ideological sphere,

²²⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings 1921-26* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1978).

²²⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), o. 375.

²²⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 375.

²²⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 83

²²⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings 1921-26* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1978).

²²⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 84.

dominated by the conservative Southern intellectuals, is key to the maintenance of the bond between peasants and big landowners. The former were bound to the latter through the mediation of intellectuals. An agrarian bloc liaising with Northern capitalism and preserving the status quo was created in the South, and the Southern intellectuals, whose loyalties resided not with the peasants but with national and European societies, were instrumental in ensuring its cohesion. One of the keys to the success of the alliance between workers and peasants is the formation of organic intellectuals bound to the proletariat, in order to break with the agrarian bloc supported by Southern intellectuals and to organise peasant masses into autonomous and independent formations.²³⁰ The First World War brought significant changes to social disintegration of the South. It provided peasants with an organic conception of class struggle and the discipline needed to reconstruct the state after the capitalist catastrophe. It is possible to draw a parallel between Gramsci's analysis and the role of violence and the impact of armed conflict on peasant masses in Colombia, which contributed to the emergence of a peasant consciousness including the experiences, culture, and interests of peasants, and ensuring their cohesion with the help of organic intellectuals (Chapter 3). Gramsci's emphasis on the role of intellectuals in the preservation of the status quo, and also on their potential to break with conservative ideologies, is crucial to the understanding of the creation and survival of peasant communities. In all three empirical chapters that follow, I will point to the different layers of intellectuals involved either in a negative or a positive way with peasant communities, and stress their origins and functions in relation to both peasant communities and other actors. These intellectuals have a key role regarding the emergence of a new peasant consciousness (Chapter 3), peasant communities' strategies to protect their territory (Chapter 4), and the formation of alternative historical blocs (Chapter 5).

Gramsci identifies factory workers and peasants as "the two driving forces of the proletarian revolution" and the "backbone of the revolution".²³¹ However, the former would have to be the leading force. Gramsci argues that peasants, if left by themselves, would not be able to organise and wage a revolution. The mass of peasants has to be organised, and the new psychology that emerged out of the War has to be channelled and directed towards the accomplishment of a concrete historical goal.²³² These themes come back in several

²³⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings 1921-26*.

²³¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 86.

²³² Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, pp. 86-87.

articles. Solidarity between peasants and workers is key to the resolution of the Southern problem, and eventually to the problem of political power at a national level: “only the working class, by seizing political and economic power from the hands of the bankers and capitalist, is in a position to resolve the central problem of national life in Italy – the Southern problem”.²³³ Gramsci emphasised the leading role of the working class, but he is aware that such a solution needed the support of the peasantry. Collaboration between peasants and workers is fundamental in that “the working class is the most politically educated section of the whole of the working people; it must confront the problem of force and realize that it can be largely resolved by the actions of the peasant masses”.²³⁴ Peasants would prepare the ground for a frontal assault of the workers against the state. They are “the principal actors in the pre-revolutionary action”, Gramsci affirms.²³⁵ In fact,

The workers’ emancipation can be secured only through an alliance between the industrial workers of the North and the poor peasants of the South – an alliance designed to smash the bourgeois State; found the workers’ and peasants’ State; and construct a new apparatus of industrial production that will serve the needs of agriculture, serve to industrialize the backward agriculture of Italy and hence raise the level of the national produce to the benefit of the working masses.²³⁶

This theme is further explored in Gramsci’s essay on the Southern question, where he emphasises the key role of class alliances and argues that revolutionary action should be conducted jointly by workers and peasants under the leadership of the industrial proletariat (Gramsci, 1978). Leading, in this case, means “making these two questions [the Southern question and that of the Vatican] its own from the social point of view; understanding the class demands which they represent; incorporating these demands into its revolutionary transitional programme; placing these demands among the objectives for which it struggles”.²³⁷ This view on the Southern question is interesting in that it problematises the question of the autonomy of the peasantry in relation to class alliances, the role of intellectuals, and the structures and hegemonic projects of the capitalist class.

Gramsci also points to the difficulties of uniting peasant masses and creating peasant parties. Achieving this unity requires a “dialectical relation” between “spontaneous” peasant impulses and the activities of intellectuals situating themselves “on a new basis of concrete

²³³ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 375

²³⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 181.

²³⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 180.

²³⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, p. 376.

²³⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings 1921-26*.

pro-peasant policies".²³⁸ Such a dialectical relationship between intellectuals and peasants can be observed in the creation and continuing existence of peasant communities. I will pay attention to the articulation between the interests and objectives of intellectuals – such as church members; NGO workers, both national and international; national politicians; and academics – and peasant communities, and how this contributes to the formation of an alternative historical bloc based on rural issues and themes (Chapter 4).

The alliance between workers and peasants relates to the town-countryside relationship and the importance of the agrarian question. Gramsci deals with these questions in the context of the *Risorgimento* (i.e., Italian unification) and relates them to the Italian state formation process and its national structure. According to Gramsci, the North/South opposition during the *Risorgimento* reflects an opposition between cities and countryside. There was no organic relationship between countryside and cities, separated by very distinct civil and cultural traditions. Gramsci pays attention to cultural conceptions and mental attitudes, to the structure and origin of intellectuals, and their reflection in the political programmes of national political parties.²³⁹ Some of Gramsci's core concepts come into play in his analysis of the relationships between North and South and the formation of Italian unity. He stresses the mix of coercion and consent used by the democratic liberals, representing the northern urban bloc, opposed to the Southern rural bloc of the *Mezzogiorno*, in order to discipline and channel the discontent of peasants; he highlights the importance of leadership, of the North over the South, and the lack of leadership of peasant masses. He also points to the role of intellectuals in ensuring the cohesion of a given bloc.²⁴⁰ Gramsci's analysis in fact points to the importance of framing peasant communities' struggles within the broader context of the Colombian state formation process.

Finally, Gramsci points to the role that cultural ideas and beliefs play in explaining the backwardness and lack of development of the South. According to the bourgeois ideology, the latter is blamed on the "organic incapacity"²⁴¹ of the peasants of the South and their racial, biological inferiority. Cultural ideas are used to hide the fact that inequalities between North and South actually lie in economic and political conditions.²⁴² The problems of the

²³⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 74-75.

²³⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 92-94.

²⁴⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 94-102.

²⁴¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 71.

²⁴² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 71.

South are perceived as local problems, not as national problems. In his essay about the Southern question, Gramsci argues that even the Northern proletariat has adopted this view, and that its modification is part of the solution to the Southern problem. Gramsci affirms that “in order to win the trust and consent of the peasants and of some semiproletarian urban categories”, workers must

...overcome certain prejudices and conquer certain forms of egoism which can and do subsist within the working class as such, even when craft particularism has disappeared [...] They must think as workers who are members of a class which aims to lead the peasants and intellectuals. Of a class which can win and build socialism only if it is aided and followed by the great majority of these social strata. If this is not achieved, the proletariat does not become the leading class; and these strata (which in Italy represent the majority of the population), remaining under bourgeois leadership, enable the State to resist the proletarian assault and wear it down.²⁴³

As I will later show, in the Colombian case, a similar rhetoric can be observed in the discourse of Colombian ruling elites regarding peasants, although the social structures and nature of exploitation in rural and agricultural society differed from the one on which Gramsci bases his analysis. This rhetoric is based on cultural ideas and beliefs that hide and justify the exploitation and domination of landless peasants by large landowners. This discourse, relayed by government officials, economic associations and unions organically linked to large landowners, and conservative intellectuals, pervades Colombian society and its urban population, contributing to an anti-peasant bias that portrays peasants as pre-modern, backward, opposing development, and, not least, collaborators or members of the guerrillas.²⁴⁴ I will draw attention to the relationship between cultural and material factors linked to the domination of peasants in my analysis of how peasant communities break and challenge this anti-peasant bias (Chapter 2).

The conflict between global and local dynamics is often portrayed in terms of ethnicity or race within the civil war literature. However, through its emphasis on class struggle and uneven development, a focus on Gramsci seems to be more adequate to Latin America's dynamics, even though class solidarities and other collective identities are often interrelated. For instance, in Colombia, local resistance is principally led by indigenous, peasants, and Afro-Colombian people. I argue that local peace initiatives are better understood as resistance to forms of class domination and violence based on material modes of production. This places the use of land and the exploitation of natural resources at the centre of this struggle between

²⁴³ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings 1921-26*.

²⁴⁴ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada: Estado, desarrollo y guerra civil en Colombia* (Bogotá, Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2013).

subaltern groups and ruling elites. Identities play an important role, but I argue that the underlying problem and structural dynamics affecting diverse ethnic groups in Colombia, such as Afro-Colombian and indigenous people, are the same as those affecting the peasant population. In addition, all these identities share a common adherence to a mode of production based on subsistence and the respect of natural resources. Finally, whilst the local resistance represented by peasant-led peace initiatives must be linked to national and local violence caused by the armed conflict, it also represents an opposition to external intervention linked to a capitalist mode of production and the political actors associated with the latter. I will now address the implication of using Gramsci's concepts in violent settings where external interventions do play a considerable role.

“Weak states”, civil wars, and organic crises

War-torn societies are located at the intersection between global dynamics led by the capitalist mode of production and exploitation, national dynamics and local dynamics of violence fuelled by historical modes of political, and social and economic domination inherited from the colonial period. Against the literature on weak states, I argue that the use of a Gramscian framework of analysis is better suited to the analysis of civil armed conflicts. By moving away from institutional perspectives that emphasise state functions and the failure to ensure the monopoly on the use of violence, a Gramscian perspective points to the social basis of states and to the lack of hegemony. Gramsci, in this sense, can be considered as a historian of ‘the instability of weak states (...) that unify comparatively late (...) and do so on the basis of poorly constructed foundations’.²⁴⁵ To develop this argument, I introduce the concept of organic crisis.

Gramsci usually associates the term ‘organic’ with many different words. For instance, he talks of the ‘organic quality’ of intellectuals²⁴⁶ and of ‘historically organic ideologies’.²⁴⁷ In these contexts, the term organic refers to the fact that intellectuals or ideologies have the specific functions of ensuring the homogeneity between structure and superstructures, of organising human masses and the terrain on which they move. They are therefore connected to the formation of hegemony or counter-hegemony by social class forces in their attempts

²⁴⁵ Schechter, D. ‘The Historical Bloc: Toward a Typology of Weak States and Contemporary Legitimation Crises’, in *Antonio Gramsci*, edited by McNally, M. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²⁴⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 12.

²⁴⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 376.

to maintain a specific social order or create an alternative order. In this regard, they are necessary for the maintenance of a specific mode of production and for the social basis of the hegemony of the ruling class. But Gramsci also uses the term 'organic crisis' to describe a crisis of hegemony, or a general crisis of the State.²⁴⁸ A crisis of hegemony refers to these historical situations of conflicts between rulers and ruled, when subaltern classes no longer recognise the traditional parties that govern them. The ruling class has lost its capacity to lead and only dominates subaltern classes through coercion, which means that the latter 'have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously (...). The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born'.²⁴⁹ This could be either because of the ruling class's failure to assert its political leadership, because consent has been forcibly extracted, or because new popular demands put forward by subaltern groups have led to a revolution. These situations usually lead to a crisis of the state in general and can trigger violent confrontations. Only an organic solution can put an end to such crises, and this highly depends on the ability and capacity of one of the groups in contention to gather the other groups under its sole banner and leadership.²⁵⁰

On this basis, I argue that it is possible to establish a parallel between civil wars and Gramsci's concept of organic crisis. Together with the concept of the integral state, such parallel constitutes a useful alternative to explanations of civil wars based on the greed and grievance model.²⁵¹ Gramsci's conception of the state as political society and civil society emphasises the role and function of private elements of society in conditions of hegemony, but also conditions of organic crisis:

A weakened State structure is like a flagging army; the commandos – i.e. the private armed organisations – enter the field, and they have two tasks: to make use of illegal means, while the State appears to remain within legality, and thus to reorganise the State itself.²⁵²

Within violent settings, the ethical function of the state tends to be hidden from view, while its coercive and repressive function prevails. As other scholars who have applied Gramsci's political theory to violent contexts explain, this coercive dimension of hegemony is often left aside and forgotten. As Dodge argues (2006: 457), for Gramsci, 'the extended deployment

²⁴⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 210.

²⁴⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 275-276.

²⁵⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 210-211.

²⁵¹ Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. 'Greed and grievance in civil war', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56 (2004) pp. 553-595.

²⁵² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 232.

of coercion or the use of conflict by one group to defeat another is used to make sure that the conditions exist for hegemony to develop'.²⁵³ Dodge shows in the context of post-war reconstruction in Iraq and the failure of American policies that ideologies and institutions alone are not enough to generate a sufficient level of consent to secure hegemony. Applied at international level, this means 'a state achieves international hegemony when it manages to construct a world system based upon the combination or 'fit' of material power, ideological domination and institutional stability'.

In addition, an emphasis on the concept of organic crisis provides a useful alternative to the Weberian conceptual approach that characterises the statebuilding literature and emphasises state institutions and functions as key factors of security and development. By placing the political process at the centre of the analysis to explain the crisis of states, a Gramscian approach to civil wars moves away from the assumption that the strengthening of state institutions and functions is the only prerequisite for peace, security, and development, and stresses the need for an organic relationship between the different layers or structures of society. Such an emphasis on coercion is also coherent with recent Colombian studies that analyse state formation through the prism of violence and illegality.²⁵⁴ It also problematises the autonomy of state institutions and points to the fact that the power of the state lies in the social and ideological consensus within which its institutions evolve and in the ability of one social group to gain or extract the consent of other groups and institutionalise this power, which ultimately relies on force. Once this social and ideological consensus is broken, institutions no longer work. Dodge has shown in the context of the invasion of Iraq by the USA that statebuilding plans that conceive of state institutions and apparatus as empty shells or tools that can be inherited and shaped according to a new common sense are doomed to fail.²⁵⁵

It is possible to provide a reading of the crisis of the Colombian state according to the concept of organic crisis. While the ruling elites have managed to assert their domination over the dominated groups, they could not develop their leadership on the latter. Popular protests and discontent could be either repressed or channelled through alliances at the regional and national level until the mid-1960s. The failure to address the agrarian question

²⁵³ Dodge, T. 'The Sardinian', pp. 457-458.

²⁵⁴ González, F.E. *Poder*.; González, F.E. et al. *Violencia política*.; González, F.E. et al. *Conflicto y territorio*.

²⁵⁵ Dodge, T. 'Coming face to face with bloody reality', p. 267.

and insert the rural population into a national historical bloc created breaches that illegal armed groups took advantage of in order to contest the authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty of the state through a war of movement. This challenge, combined with the failure to broaden the social bases of the state and gain the consent of peasants, has put the Colombian state on the verge of disintegration. This, in turn, led to external interventions – in the form of various peacebuilding, statebuilding, and development policies, either civil or military – in order to ensure the existence of the Colombian state in conformity with neoliberal international norms and values. However, I argue that the solution to the Colombian organic crisis and the nature of peace achieved depend on the outcome of political struggles at national level rather than on external interventions. Thus a study of peacebuilding in Colombia must take as a starting point local resistance to political power.

The 'national point of departure' and external intervention

My analysis of local resistance in Colombia takes the resistance of peasant communities as a point of departure. I consider this point of departure as nodal in the analysis of wider transformations related to the peace process in Colombia. Within these peasant communities, local, national, and global dynamics meet. Gramsci was a 'profound national political thinker'²⁵⁶ who nevertheless always took into account the interconnection between national and international realms. This perspective suits Latin American political realities, whose national political dynamics remain dominant. While these national realities are constrained by international economic and political phenomenon, global conceptual approaches usually lack explanatory power when it comes to Latin America.²⁵⁷ Contrary to peacebuilding and statebuilding studies which take the international actors, policies, and concepts as their starting point to analyse national and local settings, this section, inspired by Gramsci's understanding of the relationship between the national and international, argues that:

...the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is 'original' and (in a certain sense) unique: these relations must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them. To be sure, the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is 'national' – and it is from this point of departure that one must begin. Yet the perspective is international and cannot be otherwise.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 38.

²⁵⁷ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 38.

²⁵⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 240.

In this regard, although my starting point is local responses to armed conflict's local dynamics and the state's strategies, peasant communities also have to be considered as a form of resistance to a domination based on capitalist and neoliberal modes of production linked to the global political economy. This does not challenge the fact that they are first and foremost resisting and trying to overcome the violence which keeps the war economy, or 'systems of violence',²⁵⁹ going. But under this lens, the peasantry appears as a subaltern class contesting illegal armed actors' violence and domination, the state, and neoliberalism. I aim to show their role in constituting and contesting the social, economic and political orders in which they evolve and, eventually, in building peace. Therefore, the account will describe changes to the relations of production and violence that affected peasant-led peace initiatives at national level, while embedding them within the global political economy of uneven development. Whereas the point of departure is local, the combination of both national and international dimensions of peasant communities' struggles will prove key in order to assess their role in challenging political power and bringing about social change.

Political power and social change

At first sight, it is hard to understand how non-violence can be successful in armed conflict contexts. However, the experience of peasant communities proves that non-violent strategies can be successful within such violent settings. Theories of non-violent civil resistance rest on a particular understanding of power according to which the sources of the ruler's power depend on the obedience and cooperation of the ruled subjects.²⁶⁰ Such an understanding departs from conceptions of power as violence or coercion. It has informed civil resistance campaigns and practice, and was coherently articulated by Sharp.²⁶¹ This understanding of power has been used so far to explain how civil resistance campaigns were able to overthrow dictatorships, put an end to colonisation, or protest non-democratic laws within formally democratic institutions and contexts. However, it has not been applied to contexts of civil wars where resistance is exerted not only against actors backed by state power but also against illegal armed actors. Although recent studies have shown that civilian

²⁵⁹ Richani, N. *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002).

²⁶⁰ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*.

²⁶¹ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*.

institutions proved to be a critical factor for both explaining and limiting levels of violence,²⁶² the vast majority of studies of civil resistance campaigns in civil war contexts is either descriptive or normative.²⁶³ There is reason to believe that local peasant communities have had a positive impact on the direct violence they faced, but useful insights could be gained from a study of their struggle to build peace and challenge structural violence. This is where Gramsci's understanding of power proves useful, as it points to the social basis of power and articulates both its material and ideational aspects. Theories of non-violence might be able to explain how non-violent strategies contribute to the seizing or overthrowing of political power, but Gramsci's understanding of power goes further. It is not sufficient to withdraw one's consent and get the agreement of the masses in order to bring about social and political change. It is necessary to rely on coercion and exercise a decisive function within the economic structure, and ensure the coherency of structure and superstructures through the formation of an alternative historical bloc.

For Gramsci, social change in modern societies is brought about by taking power, or control of the state, through the waging of a war of position. A given social group rises to power both through hegemonic activity within civil society and the formation of alternative historical blocs to overcome the economic-corporate stage of its development, and reach a universal stage that will assert its hegemony over other subordinate groups by representing their interests. In addition, the hegemony of the ruling group must be based on its decisive function within the economic structure. It is not enough to educate the consent of subaltern group. It is also necessary to build alliances and a hegemonic historical bloc which will unite the economic structure with the superstructures. For Gramsci, any attempt at taking state power through a war of positions is pointless if a given social group cannot exercise this decisive function within the economic structure. The logic is different with a strategy of war or manoeuvre. It is possible to take control of the state and then seize by force the means of production. Any attempt by a given social group to change the world without taking power or exercising a decisive function in the economy is probably doomed to failure and will end up in reformism, passive revolution, or *transformismo*. In the rest of this chapter, I lay the ground for the empirical case studies that follow.

²⁶² Kaplan, O. 'Nudging Armed Groups'; Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians';

²⁶³ Alther, G. 'Colombian peace communities'; Anrup, R. and Español, J. 'Una comunidad de paz'; Arbeláez Rudas, M. 'Comunidades de Paz'; Burnyeat, G. 'On a Peak in Darien'; Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado'; Mallarino, M.R. *Estrategias civiles*.

From resistance to alternative historical blocs for peace

Gramsci explains accommodation and how dominant groups establish their hegemony over subaltern groups. But he does that in order to think about how to transform accommodation into rebellion,²⁶⁴ even though he does not use the term counter-hegemony. Thinking about counter-hegemony, therefore, involves thinking in a Gramscian way²⁶⁵ about how subaltern groups can bring about social and political change. Gramsci's interest in subaltern groups was threefold. He aimed to develop a methodology for studying subaltern groups, to write their history, and to reflect on the development of alternative political strategy of transformation based on subaltern groups.²⁶⁶ In this section, I relate these three aspects to peasant community initiatives. Peasant communities' efforts represent an attempt to break with the structures that gave rise to the armed conflict and state violence, and develop a political economy that does not contribute to the reproduction of the armed conflict. They aim to create social relations that do not reproduce these structures, but rather transform them with the aim of achieving and bringing about peace. Their practices represent conscious hegemonic projects and strategies aimed at challenging the social, political, and economic basis of power in Colombia.

Power, subaltern groups, and counter-hegemony

In his writings on subaltern groups, Gramsci establishes a link between the political and cultural realms of everyday life and struggles for hegemony at the national-popular level. Gramsci explains how everyday life and culture can be mobilised to develop a new critical consciousness that goes beyond subaltern groups' local settings and reaches a universal, ethico-political stage. In fact, as Munck argues, 'the cultural struggle to create an identity is inseparable from the struggle for power or access to it'.²⁶⁷ Culture and politics are indeed intermingled within peasant communities' struggle to develop a new common sense, develop alternative economies, and present peasants as political subjects entitled with individual and collective rights. These cannot be separated from their struggle for power within Colombian

²⁶⁴ Glassman, J. 'Cracking Hegemony: Gramsci and the Dialectics of Rebellion', In *Gramsci: Space, Nature, Politics*, edited by Ekers, M.; Hart, G. and Kipfer, S. (Oxford, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013), pp. 241-257.

²⁶⁵ Morton, A.D. *Unravelling Gramsci*.

²⁶⁶ Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak: Presentations and interpretations of Gramsci's concept of the subaltern', in *Rethinking Gramsci*, edited by Green, M.E. (Oxon, Routledge, 2011) p. 69.

²⁶⁷ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 171.

society. Similarly, peasant communities' cultural link with their territories and the practices they develop within these very territories are closely related to their struggle for power (Chapter 3).

Gramsci's thought is useful to understand the power of the powerless. He not only reflected on subaltern groups for its own sake, but to try and design strategies of political transformation. Gramsci's reflections on subaltern groups are closely related to the other concepts he developed. As Green argues,²⁶⁸ it is necessary to 'understand how the subaltern classes relates to Gramsci's thought as a whole'. This is because 'his analysis of the subaltern is interwoven with his political, social, intellectual, cultural, philosophical, religious, and economic analyses.' The possibility, or even necessity, of waging a war of position and not a war of manoeuvre is linked to Gramsci's conceptualisation of the state and its associated distinction between East and West. As power is not concentrated in the state as the sole locus of power, but is spread throughout civil society as well, Gramsci comes to the conclusion that political power and therefore social change can be best achieved through the taking of positions of power within civil society with the help of intellectuals. Civil society is not conceived as a realm of freedom, as liberal peacebuilding policies assume, but as a realm of hegemony. Ultimately, the transformation of subaltern groups' position 'requires a transformation of the state and its oppressive social relations, since subaltern groups can only cease being "subaltern" once they have transformed the relations of subordination that cause their marginalization'.²⁶⁹ Gramsci believed that subaltern groups can bring about social change and alter their subordinate position. Through his analyses, he came up with a political strategy through which subaltern groups can achieve such transformation. The latter requires 'political struggle', in the sense that 'subaltern groups have to become conscious of their social position, organize, and struggle to transform their social positions, since organization and representation alone will not transform the relations of subordination'.²⁷⁰ According to Green, 'for Gramsci, a self-aware and historically informed conscious leadership combined with the spontaneous political activity of the people is the "real political action" of subaltern groups'.²⁷¹ Subaltern groups have to form alliances with other subaltern groups, some of which have to assume moral and intellectual leadership in order to develop a new culture or

²⁶⁸ Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak', pp. 69-70.

²⁶⁹ Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak', p. 86.

²⁷⁰ Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak', p. 85.

²⁷¹ Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak', p. 85.

values, new social relations, and a new conception of the state. These new values must be defended through a war of position for subaltern groups to become dominant within society and eventually become state. Subaltern groups must go and look beyond their local settings and identities as subaltern. They must go beyond asking the state to merely protect them and their rights, and must 'historicize and conceptualize the relations that cause their subordination and attempt to transform the relations and systems of power that created and maintain the relations'.²⁷²

Gramsci's reflections on subaltern groups are therefore useful to understand how peasant communities can challenge material relations of power in contexts of armed conflicts and peacebuilding settings. In such contexts and settings, violence seems to rule out any possibility of non-violent civil initiatives, thus subordinating the realm of politics to the military dynamics of the conflict. Also, civilians have usually been considered as powerless when facing illegal armed groups and the state army. It seems at first sight that Gramsci himself would discard any chance of conducting a war of position within these contexts. It is then crucial to explain how local actors are able to place the realm of politics (as opposed to the military realm) at the centre of the struggle against the state in contexts of violent armed conflicts, thus creating spaces in which the political process can be reinstated and the domination of hegemonic forces contested through a war of position. It is also necessary to focus on how local actors can create these trenches and fortifications required by the war of position to reach the ethico-political phase of their counter-hegemonic initiatives, through the development of a critical consciousness, taking control of the space, and making alternative historical blocs. These three elements structure the next three chapters in the form of case studies based on the experience of the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC. Peasant communities have developed a new common sense. They have waged a political struggle over land and the nature of the Colombian state, and have built alliances with other subaltern social groups. But before explaining the rationale of these chapters in more detail, I must introduce the methodological criteria developed by Gramsci himself for the study of subaltern groups.

Gramsci's methodological criteria for the study of subaltern groups

²⁷² Green, M.E. 'Gramsci cannot speak', p. 87.

Gramsci offers useful methodological criteria in order to understand new forms of political agency in relation to the history and practice of subaltern groups. Before turning to these criteria, it is useful to stress that for Gramsci, the history of subaltern classes is intertwined with that of state-civil society relationships.²⁷³ The subaltern groups' activities, given their subordination to the ruling groups, are always subject to the activity of the latter.²⁷⁴ In this regard, the 'history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic', and the process of their unification 'is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups'.²⁷⁵ A study of subaltern groups will therefore also be a study of the ruling class's reaction to the activity of the former. Such a study must then include attempts by the dominant groups to assert their domination, and eventually their hegemony, on subaltern groups,²⁷⁶ as ruling groups usually seek to create new parties or political formations in order to 'conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them'.²⁷⁷

In his notes on Italian History, Gramsci introduces several criteria for the study of subaltern groups. These criteria focus on the political formations created by the latter in order to exercise their resistance and counter-hegemonic activities. These political forms of agency will be analysed in relation to 'transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production'.²⁷⁸ Gramsci also argues that for subaltern groups to challenge the material basis of their domination, they must develop new ideas and ideologies. As a result, it is necessary not only to study the 'quantitative diffusion' of the newly created political formations created by the subaltern groups, but also 'their origins in pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology and aims they conserve for a time'.²⁷⁹ The key is to understand why some subaltern groups try and assert their autonomy within the old political, social, and economic framework – they might try and influence the traditional dominant groups' political formations, to whom they are actively or passively affiliated, and this might lead to processes of 'decomposition, renovation or neo-formation' – while others break with this framework and develop new ideas or 'integral autonomy'.²⁸⁰ In this regard, the six criteria laid out by Gramsci are not just methodological. According to Green, they also

²⁷³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 53.

²⁷⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 55.

²⁷⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 54-55.

²⁷⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 53.

²⁷⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 52.

²⁷⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 52.

²⁷⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 52.

²⁸⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 52.

...represent the phases in which a subaltern group develops, from a “primitive” position of subordination to a position of autonomy. That is, the phases represent the sequential process in which a subaltern group develops and grows into a dominant social group or, in other instances, is stopped in its ascent to power by dominant social groups or political forces.²⁸¹

Gramsci’s method also stresses the importance of analysing the common terrain occupied by both groups and where structure and agency meet. This terrain determines the array of strategies available to both actors. The final outcome will be the product of political struggles over power. Two final elements or ‘yardsticks’ are missing to be able to measure the level of historical and political consciousness achieved by subaltern classes. These yardsticks are the two phases through which subaltern groups acquire ‘autonomy *vis-à-vis* the enemies they had to defeat’, and ‘support from the groups which actively or passively assisted them’ in order to build a counter-hegemony.²⁸² This method therefore links the autonomy and agency of subaltern groups to both the political formations they create because of their counter-hegemonic activities, and the material structures of the sphere of economic production.

In addition to these methodological considerations, Gramsci emphasises the asymmetry between subaltern groups’ strategies and ruling groups’ strategies. He thought that the success of the working class’s strategies to resist and gain autonomy from the ruling class and eventually become state has to be related to its capacity and ability to develop a *new political practice* that is not symmetrical with that of the dominant classes. Whereas the ruling class can rely on the state to assert and maintain its domination, the standpoint of subaltern groups is mainly to be found within economic and civil society. As Mouffe argues:

Even in this respect, the history of the subaltern classes is asymmetrical, ‘their history, therefore is intertwined with that of civil society, it is a “disjointed” and discontinuous function of the history of civil society, and thereby of the history of states and groups of states’, A discontinuous history, a history of a mediated relation to the state – in short, a history of an asymmetrical autonomisation which aims to construct new political forms.²⁸³

Therefore, if the working class wants to avoid being co-opted by the state, ‘it must gain local hegemony both before and after the seizure of power; This implies the existence of non-state institutional forms which encourage a dynamic development of the base and generate mechanisms for the “socialisation of politics”’.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Green, M.E. ‘Gramsci cannot speak’, pp. 75-76.

²⁸² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 53.

²⁸³ Mouffe, C. (ed.) *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) p. 212.

²⁸⁴ Mouffe, C. (ed.) *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) p. 220.

Finally, a subaltern group is involved in a moment of political activity only when it reaches the third stage or level in the development of a political class consciousness and aims to establish its hegemony in society. The political struggle of the class and its party is one which is conducted in terms of establishing an alternative hegemony. It is not the site which makes a struggle political, but the way in which the struggle is conducted. It is the way in which questions are posed, in a universal rather than a corporative manner which makes the struggle political or not. Peasant communities' struggles in Colombia have reached this third stage. By using a universal language, the language of human rights, and by claiming that their initiatives could represent the basis of a universal-national peace, they engage in a political struggle over power.

Rationale of the case-study chapters

The structure of the remaining chapters unfolds as follows. The case study chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) focus on the agential dimension of this struggle for peace while at the same time stressing the interplay between the actions and practices of all actors involved on one hand, and the economic, political, social, and cultural structures that characterise Colombia on the other. The latter 'are not reducible to the activities that they govern or the practices they support; rather it is these social structures that make human activity and social practices possible and it is within this structural context that a theory of hegemony must be developed'.²⁸⁵ It logically follows that a theory of hegemony takes as its subject the processes through which the social structures of a given society are reproduced and transformed. Joseph argues that 'it is precisely this location in the process of social reproduction/transformation which places constraints but also allows for the possibility of different agents to construct and elaborate their own hegemonic blocs, projects and alliances'.²⁸⁶ This echoes Jessop's argument about the strategic selectivity of structures.²⁸⁷

The case studies then develop as follows. First, if we want to change the world, we must challenge the ideas that contribute to the reproduction of social relations and give rise to the common sense that pervades society. For this to happen, dominated groups must be conscious of the context of their struggle and of their interests and power. Counter-

²⁸⁵ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 4.

²⁸⁶ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 10.

²⁸⁷ Jessop, B. *State Theory*.

hegemonic projects represent a conscious attempt to act upon a given situation. The first of the case study chapters therefore focuses on the process through which peasant communities broke with the hegemonic projects of illegal armed actors, the state, and Colombian political society. I trace this consciousness back to social and political struggles over the land, and I analyse the process through which peasant communities move from the economic-corporate stage to the political stage, following Gramsci's interpretation of the second moment of the 'relations of forces'.²⁸⁸ This consciousness must also be situated within the structured context that gave rise to and sustains hegemony in Colombia. Gramsci is well aware that the consciousness of subaltern groups is politically determined, and that the move from the stages mentioned earlier require political leadership and education in order to overcome the fragmentation of consciousness that characterises the first stage of the political moment of the relations of forces. Consciousness needs to be stimulated to transcend its particular location. In this regard, peasant communities must act against the inertia and indifference of Colombian society; against the ideologies, mentalities, and consciousness of individuals that contribute to the reproduction of hegemonic structures; and make visible the moral crisis of the Colombian society.²⁸⁹ However, the struggle of peasant communities cannot be reduced to a study of ideas and beliefs, be they those held by members of peasant communities or those that support the domination of ruling groups.

Indeed, a hegemonic struggle is more than just a clash of world views or group consciousnesses. There is also a need to change the social relations behind ideas that contribute to inequalities, alienation, and violence in order to change the world. Peasant community counter-hegemonic projects are driven by the necessity to transform the structures of hegemony, or domination where hegemony is not complete, starting from the localised consciousness of the particular group they represent. Because ideas find their origins in social structures and institutions, they must therefore challenge not just the dominant ideas within society, but the very social structures and institutions that produce them.²⁹⁰ Here the focus is not just on ideas or consciousness, but on the structures and underlying causes of a given state of affairs, such as violence and the armed conflict in Colombia. However, the question remains as to how it is possible to change social relations.

²⁸⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 180.

²⁸⁹ Chambers, P.A. 'The Ambiguities of Human Rights in Colombia: Reflections on a Moral Crisis', *Latin American Perspectives*, 40:192 (2013) pp. 118–137.

²⁹⁰ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 11.

This raises the problem of the strategies used by peasant communities to conduct their counter-hegemonic struggle. I argue that space plays a key role in the struggle conducted by peasant communities. It is through spatial strategies that they manage to assert their control over a territory and bring about change. Indeed, as Joseph argues:

Counter-hegemonies are broken up and fragmented, confined to plural space and micro time. Therefore, if a counter-hegemonic project is to be truly successful, it must transcend 'surface' hegemonic battles with other projects, go beyond this terrain, and fundamentally alter the deeper hegemony of society. It has to challenge the relatively enduring space and time generated by the underlying social structures, the relatively unconscious character of these relations and engage in a process of transformation. Because of the relative weight that deeper, structural hegemony has over actual hegemonic practices, a transformative project is not easy and is really only achieved under conditions of structural crisis. Then the gaps and fractures that start to open up allow counter-hegemony more of a chance to squeeze out its own space.²⁹¹

Finally, for Gramsci, if a counter-hegemonic or anti-passive revolution struggle is to be successful, the challenge of social structure must be accompanied by the formation of alternative hegemonic blocs supported by political projects and social alliances. 'The capturing of space is linked to the physical construction of a hegemonic bloc which can forge together a unity, while also maintaining a clear direction'.²⁹² Hence, the third case study chapter studies the efforts of peasant communities to build such an alternative hegemonic bloc, while stressing the interaction between the alternatives projects of peasant communities and the ones of the dominant groups, without losing sight of the structural dimension of this hegemonic struggle. I emphasise processes such as the elaboration of political projects, the articulation of interests, the construction of social alliances, the development of historical blocs, the deployment of state strategies directed at peasant communities, and the initiation of passive revolutions. I show how the three different peasant communities represent three different models of social transformation, models which have implications for their ability to build peace.

The next three chapters are based on this rationale. I reflect on the findings established throughout these chapters in Chapter 5 of this thesis and reach a conclusion about whether, how, and to what extent peasant communities are able to challenge the power structures which sustain the armed conflict and its root causes.

²⁹¹ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 181.

²⁹² Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 181.

Chapter 3: Between Fear and Consciousness: Transforming common sense in the midst of armed conflict

This was a consciousness anchored in our heart, given that in any moment they could kill us, they will kill us and that, well, we will not be afraid of that. So I think that, well, this has been the most important aspect, this is the depth of the community, to create such a consciousness and know that if I die, well, I die fighting for a just cause, for the defense of life, the right that life be respected as well as families [...], any citizen (leader of the CdPSJA).²⁹³

Introduction

This chapter analyses how peasant communities managed to transform what Gramsci calls 'common sense' into a critical consciousness and reach a hegemonic conception of the world²⁹⁴. It is concerned with the processes through which groups of peasants who have been displaced as a consequence of the armed conflict, came to conceive of themselves as autonomous actors and think about solutions to resist and live in the midst of the armed conflict. Through such a focus on consciousness, I draw attention to the work required to translate collective consciousness in its economic-corporate phase into a universalising phase, the moment of moral and intellectual leadership, or hegemony. In other words, as the opening quotation illustrates, peasant communities' narrative has evolved from the protection of peasants living in the midst of armed conflict to the protection of any citizen or life, and the building of peace in Colombia. To analyse these processes, I use Gramsci's thought on consciousness and his concept of common sense to theorise about the relationship between thought and action, between ideas and political, social, and economic change. This theoretical framework is applied to the initiatives led by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC.

My argument is twofold. First, the possibility for collective action in the midst of armed conflict and of withdrawing consent to the domination of armed actors was made possible by a context which, according to peasants themselves, left them no other choice than to organise. It was also made possible by the development of a new consciousness based on principles of neutrality, non-violence, and human rights. However, the causal relationship between consciousness and action is not as straightforward as it might seem. An analysis of the social processes that accompanied the emergence of a particular political consciousness

²⁹³ CdP#11, San José de Apartadó, 20 April 2014.

²⁹⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 348.

shows that, in the context of civil wars, the process of losing fear played an instrumental role in the creation and resilience of peasant communities' initiatives. Such a process was decisive in that it enabled peasants to recover their autonomy and enact their own power onto external structures and actors. The loss of fear allowed peasants to break the *ley del silencio* (the law of silence). It also made possible the existence of cooperation and solidarity between the members of the community. Crucially, it allowed members of the community to engage in dialogue and collective reflections about the 'what to do' question, about possible strategies to break with the ongoing violence, and eventually build peace. The emergence of a particular political consciousness, linked to a conception of the world that challenges the common sense imposed on subaltern groups by ruling elites, and the loss of fear have interacted with each other from the birth of peasant communities until today. Their relationship is dialectical; in other words, we need both in order to explain how peasant communities managed to generate and sustain their own social and political power, and enact this power onto the external world.

Secondly, I argue that the specific consciousness, or new conception of the world, developed by members of peasant communities represents a break from both the traditional dominant ideologies on one hand, and the ideologies imposed by the armed actors, be they paramilitary groups or guerrillas, on the other. Traditional ideologies in Colombia have accompanied and supported changes in the dominant mode of production, from the *encomienda* and the *hacienda* of the colonial era to the neoliberal development models of the second half of the twentieth century. Characterised by an anti-peasant bias (reference), they have also contributed to ensuring the maintenance of peasants in a condition of subalternity. They found their political expression in the Liberal and Conservative parties that have historically mediated the relationship between the population and the state.²⁹⁵ In addition, erupting from the 1960s onward, the current illegal armed actors, paramilitary groups, and guerrillas, have tried through violent means to impose opposite social orders which also represent particular ideologies. However, by stressing notions of autonomy, dignity, and neutrality backed by a human rights discourse, I argue that the peasant initiatives under study represent a break from both the ideologies mentioned and the previous peasant-led attempts in Colombia at challenging the power structures that are at the root of their

²⁹⁵ González, F.E. *Poder*.

alienation. This new conception of the world and the political culture that comes with it have already had a huge impact at local level and represent a huge asset for an eventual post-conflict setting.

I support this argument through three distinct moments. In the first section, I introduce Gramsci's reflections on the role of consciousness for political actions. In the second, I analyse the structural origins that determined the emergence of a new conception of the world, or consciousness, within the peasant population in each one of the regions under study. Finally, in the last section, I focus on the social processes that accompanied the emergence and sustainability of peasant communities' initiatives. The loss of fear is identified as a key moment that, in the interaction with the emergence of a particular political consciousness, made possible both the withdrawal of consent and the commitment to non-violence.

Consciousness, common sense, and autonomy in the midst of armed conflict

The CdPSJA, the ACVC and the ATCC have all managed to develop principles and norms which they have used to successfully protect themselves amid armed conflict. Even though the task of challenging the dominant groups' common sense and transforming it into a critical consciousness might initially seem impossible, they have developed a new peasant identity, culture, and subject that suits their everyday needs in the midst of armed conflict. I argue that while Gramsci's reflections on the relationship between consciousness and political action are useful in helping us to understand how peasant communities managed to develop alternative conceptions of the world, they need to be extended in order to explain how they challenged violent coercion and repression to eventually break the law of silence and lose fear.

According to Gramsci, consciousness, common sense, and autonomy are closely linked. Subaltern groups gain autonomy by abandoning the ruling class's conceptions of the world and applying a new conception to their external world. In a discussion about the unity of thought and action, Gramsci indeed argues that a subaltern group has

...for reasons of submissions and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be

following it, because that is the conception which it follows in 'normal times' – that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate.²⁹⁶

For Gramsci, consciousness and autonomy are therefore intimately linked to politics understood as conscious action in pursuit of a common social goal. It is in fact 'through the activity of transforming and consciously directing other men that man realises his "humanity", his "human nature"', and can be said to be 'essentially political'.²⁹⁷ This transformation of the world is determined by consciousness and preceded by an 'ethical improvement' in the sense that a person can 'potentiate' themselves and 'develop' themselves before applying their will to the external world.²⁹⁸ In this regard, consciousness is not only grounded in the material structures of the social world, but also in human being's social activities. This gives rise to 'two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness)', one that reflects a man's practice, and another one that is 'superficially explicit or verbal'.²⁹⁹ The second one can be powerful enough 'to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity'.³⁰⁰ At the individual level, political action occurs when the unity between theory and practice within a person's consciousness is achieved. At the collective level, the 'unity between "spontaneity"³⁰¹ and "conscious leadership" or "discipline" is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes'.³⁰²

Therefore, if political change is to occur under the impulsion of subaltern groups, a change in their consciousness has to happen. Subaltern groups have to detach themselves from the common sense imposed on them by ruling groups and used to maintain the subaltern groups' condition of passivity, in order to form a distinct social and cultural bloc, or 'intellectual-moral bloc'.³⁰³ They must break this relative acceptance or consent, which is part of any hegemony and which is awarded to the ruling groups, in order to be able to think about strategies of resistance and consciously think of themselves as autonomous actors. In a context of armed conflict, this implies more than a mere transformation of common sense,

²⁹⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 327.

²⁹⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 360.

²⁹⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 360.

²⁹⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 333.

³⁰⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 333.

³⁰¹ By spontaneity, Gramsci refers to subaltern groups' conception of the world or feelings which has not been mediated by a conscious will or educational activity, but 'have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by 'common sense' (Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 198-199).

³⁰² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 198-199.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 332-333.

as coercion prevails over consent. Challenging common sense also means breaking the law of silence and the violent coercion which maintain peasants in a state of passivity. That said, Gramsci's conception of power as both coercion and consent indicates that even in violent settings consent has to some extent to be awarded, opening up a role for ideas in the transformation of social relations. Gramsci's conception of ideology identifies different levels on a continuous scale. While philosophy appears at the higher end of this scale as a coherent 'intellectual order' in which the individual dimension of thought prevails, common sense lies at the bottom for its 'diffuse' and 'un-coordinated' features.³⁰⁴ Common sense is 'mechanically imposed by the external environment'.³⁰⁵ As Dodge argues,

Common sense is the structure of everyday thinking through which the majority of any population live the greater part of their lives. It is within Common sense that the hegemonic ideology exists in symbiotic dominance with its vanquished predecessor, securing its own influence by assimilating the more salient parts of the other.³⁰⁶

Ideologies become historical forces when their philosophical components remain in close contact with common sense.³⁰⁷ Unity between philosophy and common sense, intellectuals and the masses, theory and practice, is ensured by politics and leads to a rise of consciousness.³⁰⁸ This is then born on the level of ideologies and political and social struggles. It is also a necessary condition for the development of a hegemonic force, in the sense that hegemony 'supposes an intellectual unity and an ethics in conformity with a conception of reality that had gone beyond common sense and has become, if only within narrow limits, a critical conception'.³⁰⁹ Gramsci stresses the fact that this change in consciousness

...takes place therefore through a struggle of political 'hegemonies' and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one's own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one.³¹⁰

Consciousness is conceived as being determined by the economic structure only in the first instance. This implies that in the case of peasant communities, the formation of consciousness cannot just be traced back to the relations of exploitation imposed by neoliberalism, but has to be searched for in the political, social, and ideological realms, the

³⁰⁴ Dodge, T. 'Coming face to face with bloody reality', p. 258; Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 327-330.

³⁰⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 323.

³⁰⁶ Dodge, T. 'Coming face to face with bloody reality', p. 258.

³⁰⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 330.

³⁰⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 331.

³⁰⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 333-334.

³¹⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 333.

superstructures on which human beings become conscious of their condition of subaltern people, and on which political forces organise to either preserve or challenge structures.³¹¹ I will point to this when explaining how the political struggles in which peasant communities' members took part contributed to shaping their perception of the structural factors which are at the origins of their domination. These political struggles also gave rise to specific political cultures, which are reflected within the principles, norms, and organisations created by peasant communities.

The fact that consciousness is born on the level of ideologies and political struggles also implies that it is a social process, that it is socially mediated. In this regard, consciousness is not the product of individual reflections but of social and cultural relations between human beings, and can thus be regarded as collective consciousness. Within this process, the role of intellectuals is crucial to form and sustain this collective consciousness. Intellectuals make the activity of the masses a coherent whole,³¹² and bridge the gap between theory and practice, between two conceptions of the world, one reflected in practice, and the other in thought.³¹³ Their task is to establish a link between higher philosophies and the popular beliefs of the masses in order to construct an 'intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass'.³¹⁴ Gramsci stresses the importance of this dialectical relationship between intellectuals and subaltern groups when he explains that

Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not 'distinguish' itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people "specialised" in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.³¹⁵

To do that, intellectuals must be organically linked to subaltern groups. Any movement aiming to challenge the hegemonic common sense has to produce intellectuals emerging out of the masses while remaining in contact with them.³¹⁶ Gramsci illustrates this point in a section explaining the weaknesses and failure of idealist philosophy and the ideas of the Renaissance to extend its influence beyond the elites:

³¹¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 178.

³¹² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 330.

³¹³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 333.

³¹⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 332-333.

³¹⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 334.

³¹⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 340.

What was lacking, however, was any organic quality either of philosophical thought or of organisational stability and central cultural direction [...]. one could only have had cultural stability and an organic quality of thought if there had existed the same unity between the intellectuals and the simple as there should be between theory and practice. That is, if the intellectuals had been organically the intellectuals of those masses, and if they had worked out and made coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc.³¹⁷

As Gramsci argued, any subaltern group must exercise some kind of hegemony within civil society before gaining state power. However, this also means that hegemonic activities led by subaltern groups will be limited as they do not benefit from the capacities granted by state power and civil society institutions controlled by the state, and the means of coercion and diffusion that come with it. The fact that the peasant communities under study have managed to transform common sense into a critical consciousness and translate it into practice in the midst of armed conflict remains a puzzle, and this puzzle does not seem understandable by a change in consciousness only. This is because in Colombia, peasant consciousness was more often shaped by coercion rather than consent. In this regard, Gramsci's concept of power as both coercion and consent is useful, as it reminds us that domination requires some degree of consent to be effective, and that consent is always backed by coercion.

My argument therefore completes Gramsci's reflections on consciousness and common sense with an emphasis on how peasant communities managed to break the law of silence and lose fear. As I show in the following two sections, the process through which the peasant communities' initiatives under study transformed common sense into a critical consciousness was the product of (1) how peasants interpreted the structural factors at the roots of their domination, (2) a change in consciousness, and (3) the loss of fear. In this regard, consciousness and subjectivities of peasant communities' members are the product of the interaction between several processes of different durations: long-term structures of the conflict and class-struggles around land issues; symbolic events fixed in time; and mid-term processes of the organisation of the resistance. Before analysing the social processes through which peasant communities transformed common sense into good sense, I now turn to the structural processes which have informed peasants' consciousness.

³¹⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 330.

A historical and spatial perspective on peasant consciousness

Adopting a sociological-historical perspective, I pay attention to the social relations of production that determined and still determine in the first instance the conditions under which the consciousness of members of peasant communities under study was born and sustained. I show how social relations of production and development policies conditioned the emergence of particular political, social, and ideological superstructures. On these superstructures emerged social and political conflicts to which I then turn in order to explore the context which nurtured peasant consciousness. These conflicts gave rise to radical peasant protests and organisations whose mentalities and ideologies can still be seen in the creation and birth of the initiatives led by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC. Finally, I analyse the immediate context of the creation of these three communities, and the dynamics generated by the armed conflict that led peasants to regroup and gather in order to find ways to survive and avoid new forced displacements.

Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, and forced displacement

The processes of primitive accumulation of land, land concentration, and the displacement of frontier settlers are constant characteristics of the colonial and Colombian economy from the eighteenth until the twentieth century. The continuous expulsion of peasant population towards areas of wasteland and rainforests due to the structure of land ownership is a symbol of the lack of solution to the agrarian problem that still characterises Colombia today.³¹⁸ This economic dispossession was reflected in the political realm by the exclusion of poor rural and urban populations and their subordination to ruling and economic elites through client-based networks.³¹⁹ The lack of solution to the agrarian problem therefore had tremendous political consequences. Peasants who were not linked to the hacienda-based economic networks would move to the frontier areas and wasteland, where they would develop communities with egalitarian values.³²⁰ These values can be observed within peasant protests and movements, from the peasant revolts of the 1930s³²¹ to the creation of the FARC in the 1960s and the peasant communities under study in this thesis. The latter's initiatives must be

³¹⁸ González, F.E. *Poder*, p. 216.

³¹⁹ González, F.E. *Poder*. P. 194.

³²⁰ González, F.E. *Poder*. P. 194.

³²¹ Sánchez, G. *Las ligas campesinas en Colombia (auge y reflujó)* (Bogotá, Tiempo Presente, 1977).

conceived as a continuation of these peasant protests, even though they also represent a break from these peasant movements and illustrate the development of a new critical consciousness.

These processes started with the Spanish colonisation and were accelerated with the introduction of capitalist modes of production in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Orlando Fals Borda, one of the most renowned Colombian sociologists, characterises the impact that these processes had as a 'decomposition' of the peasantry.³²² This meant that the peasantry as a class, which has always been a class dominated and exploited by others, was disrupted and its tiers disorganised:

In general terms, it is possible to say that the peasantry has evolved from pre-capitalist forms in which the satisfaction of basic necessities was emphasized, either on third-party land or its own, to free forms of labour or small producers, in which the peasantry is subject to capitalist market and price laws, competition, profit maximization, concentration of land and monopoly of resources. This led to rural proletarianization.³²³

This 'decomposition' of the peasantry was made possible by the end of the indigenous reserves and the end of slavery, going from pre-colonial forced labour to free forms of labour which conformed better to rising capitalism, and benefited from the support of rural elites, the state, and foreign countries.³²⁴ But although the primitive accumulation of natural resources was one of the main drives of the Spanish conquest of the American continent, the concentration of land only appeared with the creation of the hacienda in the eighteenth century. This followed the introduction of liberal economic policies under the influence of both the ideals of the French Revolution and the emerging English industrial capitalism. Before that, the *encomienda* was the dominant form of social and economic association characterising the pre-independence Colombian society. The *encomienda* was considered a tool to educate the indigenous people and raise taxes, and was the source of all political and social power, prestige and wealth.³²⁵ However, the mere fact that the rights granted by the *encomienda* to the *encomendero* were awarded over a group of indigenous people and not over the land implied that the struggle for power was not for the possession of land or natural resources, but for the alienation of human labour power.³²⁶ It is only when human labour

³²² Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O. 1925-2008. Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina* (Bogotá, Siglo del Hombre Editores y CLACSO, 2009) p. 57

³²³ Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O.*, pp. 57-58.

³²⁴ Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O.*, p. 58 and 72.

³²⁵ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político en Colombia* Colección (Bogotá, Editorial Planeta Colombiana S. A., 2008) p. 76.

³²⁶ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, pp. 77-78.

power started to be scarce, either because indigenous people were exterminated or because former slaves were emancipated, that the need to own the land arose. Therefore, the interest in land ownership coincides with the need to find new forms of subordination and domination for a population that had obtained its emancipation from the *encomienda* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through biological and cultural *mestizaje* (miscegenation). While the rights over groups of indigenous people had previously allowed the extra-legal use of land, from now on the rights over land would allow the extra-legal subjection of *mestizo*³²⁷ population as labour-power.³²⁸ In other words, the legal title over land now guaranteed the use of cheap labour and the subjection of the peasant mestizo population.³²⁹ It also intricately tied peasants to the will of landowners and therefore became the limit and condition of the former's social relations and hopes of social success and enrichment. This fact is crucial to understanding the subsequent evolution of political power in Colombia.³³⁰ A series of laws between 1821 and 1850 proceeded to undo the existing tie between the peasantry and the land and favoured land concentration, thus making free labour available for the haciendas or plantations.³³¹ The vast majority of peasants became sharecroppers, tenants, or day labourers. Many of them emigrated to the Magdalena Medio river basin, where the ACVC is now located.³³²

Along this continuous diminution of safe and servile manpower, the peasants' need for land and work to survive also emerged as a consequence of the creation of the hacienda.³³³ The ownership of the land already fulfilled the function of subordination of the peasant population as it does nowadays. The only difference is that whereas today the end goal of landowners is the primitive accumulation of wealth, in the pre-independence Colombia the end goal was the acquisition of social and political power and individual prestige.³³⁴

It is interesting to note that the basis of the subjection and subordination of peasants not only derived from the ownership of legal titles over the land by large landowners, but the power of the latter also relied on the consent of the peasants themselves. This is how in the

³²⁷ A person of mixed race, especially one having Spanish and American Indian parentage.

³²⁸ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, p. 120.

³²⁹ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, pp. 122-123.

³³⁰ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, p. 127.

³³¹ Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O.*, p. 63.

³³² Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O.*, p. 64.

³³³ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, p. 119.

³³⁴ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, p. 126; Moncayo, V.M. (Compilador) *Fals Borda, O.*, p. 80.

Andean highlands – the situation was different in the lower valleys and lowlands – the hacienda became the dominant form of social, economic, and political association through which all social relations and possibilities of social success were channelled. The hacienda moulded the values and attitudes of the peasant population so that they would work towards the fulfilment of the economic needs of landowners. The peasants came to adopt the values and attitudes of the typical large landowner as the adoption of these values represented the only possibility to get a piece of land and move up the social and economic ladder. This social mimicry ensured the hegemony of landowners and laid the grounds for the authoritarianism and paternalism that still characterises Colombian politics today. In addition, the conditions imposed by the ownership of land and the social mimicry that accompanied the model of the hacienda ruled out any possibility of resistance by peasants. A critical attitude did not make functional sense as it would have ruined any chance to acquire a piece of land.³³⁵ Peasants actually sought to settle within a hacienda.³³⁶ After Independence and the progressive disappearance of the hacienda model, peasants' grievances would then be channelled through the Liberal and Conservative parties and the Church.

According to Uribe López, this permanent process of primitive accumulation of land lies at the root of the continuous expansion of the agrarian frontier and the dispossession of frontier peasants.³³⁷ This dispossession is itself at the origin of the massive forced displacement of population in general, and peasants in particular, until today. In fact, the growth of an export economy in the last decades of the nineteenth century led to an increase in the concentration of land tenure through the forced displacement of thousands of peasant settlers.³³⁸ The development of exports then correlates with the concentration of land tenure through the displacement of thousands of peasant settlers.³³⁹ It is estimated that around 5.7 million people have been displaced,³⁴⁰ 8.3 million hectares of land illegally seized, and 350 000 plots abandoned.³⁴¹ But while until the mid-twentieth century peasants were pushed towards new colonisation areas and frontier lands given the available of huge areas of

³³⁵ Guillén Martínez, F. *El poder político*, pp. 128-130.

³³⁶ González, F.E. *Poder*. P. 208.

³³⁷ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 260.

³³⁸ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition and Social Conflict on the Colombian Frontier, 1850–1936', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 16:1 (1984) pp. 27-49.

³³⁹ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 265.

³⁴⁰ References

³⁴¹ Grupo de Memoria Histórica. 'Basta Ya!'

wasteland, the vast majority now end up in urban areas, contributing to the pauperisation of the main urban centres, such as Apartadó, Barrancabermeja, Bogotá, and Medellín.

The primitive accumulation of land by large estate owners began with the growth of the Colombian export economy in the 1850s.³⁴² This is when the integration of many isolated Colombian regions began, also in part as a result of the many civil wars that characterised the nineteenth century.³⁴³ For instance, the integration of the Urabá region, where the CdPSJA was created in 1997, first occurred in a spontaneous way through the extraction and exportation of raw material, such as wood or rubber. This indicated the predisposition of the region for the exportation of agricultural goods. The commercial exploitation of land would eventually reach its peak with the intensive exportation of banana crops by the United Fruit Company from the 1960s onward.³⁴⁴

Many different actors have historically followed the migration waves of peasant settlers or attracted new settlers by creating new economic opportunities. Be they merchants, road contractors, or large landowners at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century,³⁴⁵ or cattle farmers, paramilitary groups, guerrillas, and drug traffickers in the second half of the twentieth century, these actors were not interested in politically integrating these isolated regions with the rest of the country. Taking advantage of a weak state presence, but also from the complicity of local and national authorities,³⁴⁶ they aimed to connect these regions to global and world markets and trade by exploiting primary resources (the exception to that is the guerrillas, which would extract and accumulate resources from the cultivation of coca crops for their own funding). As a result of these activities, peasant settlers have been displaced, dispossessed and displaced again, following a pattern colonisation-conflict-migration-colonisation.³⁴⁷ Forced displacement was and still is one of the conditions that generates an overflow of population and guarantees the availability of cheap labour.³⁴⁸ Catherine LeGrand explains:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a massive privatization of public lands occurred. The Colombian government officially alienated 3.2 million hectares of public lands in this period, while an even greater quantity of land passed into private hands through illegal appropriations [...] The land

³⁴² LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 37.

³⁴³ González, F.E. *Poder*. P. 215.

³⁴⁴ Botero Herrera, F. *Urabá: Colonización, Violencia y Crisis Del Estado* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquía, 1990) p. 23.

³⁴⁵ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 31.

³⁴⁶ Botero Herrera, F. *Urabá*, p. 36.

³⁴⁷ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', pp. 36-37; Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 261-262.

³⁴⁸ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, pp. 261-262.

entrepreneurs chose to privatize not any public land, but specifically that land already occupied by peasant settlers. Furthermore, they sought to monopolize immense extensions of territory [...] The cumulative effect was to block the peasants from access to the most desirable land, thus encouraging them to sell their labor power.³⁴⁹

The primitive accumulation of land combined with development policies that favoured the creation of large estates and landowners' interests to give rise to a dual structure of land tenure and ownership. Large extensions of land were then, and still are, concentrated in the hands of a few, and the smallholdings multiplied to the detriment of middle size properties.³⁵⁰ This agrarian structure was also characterised by the concentration and the idleness of the most productive lands.³⁵¹ In the nineteenth century, Colombia was still characterised by a dense highland Andean population and lowland export agriculture.³⁵² The former would eventually provide the main source of labour for the latter, through a process of migration from the highlands to the middle and lowlands. The transition from the highlands to large estates was mediated by the formation through migration of a new smallholding peasant sector in the middle altitudes and lowlands.³⁵³ In the second half of the twentieth century, government-development policies further contributed to the articulation of regions located at the periphery of the main economic centres. New migration waves followed the implementation of many different economic projects which were accompanied by the construction of roads and communication systems. The construction of the road connecting Medellín to the Caribbean Coast in the Urabá Gulf is representative of these economic projects,³⁵⁴ as is the Carare railway.³⁵⁵

The absence of a true agrarian reform has played a huge role in the persistence of primitive accumulation, land concentration, and forced displacement in Colombia until today. While there have been a few progressive laws and attempts to solve the agrarian problem,³⁵⁶ the actions of a power bloc constituted by economic, political and military elites have always succeeded in preserving the status quo.³⁵⁷ This power bloc was not uniform though. There were and still are differences within the capitalist class in Colombia, in particular between

³⁴⁹ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', pp. 34-35.

³⁵⁰ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 259.

³⁵¹ Palacios, M. *Entre la legitimidad y la violencia: Colombia 1875-1994* (Bogotá, Editorial Norma, 2003) p. 31.

³⁵² LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 28.

³⁵³ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 29.

³⁵⁴ García de la Torre, C.I. *Urabá: región, actores y conflicto. 1960-1990* (Bogotá, Cerec, 1996) p. 28.

³⁵⁵ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 39.

³⁵⁶ For instance, the Law 61 of 1874 and Law 48 of 1882; the 1926 Supreme Court ruling on land property; the Ley de Tierras under the presidency of Lopez Pumarejo in 1936; and the creation of the ANUC in 1967.

³⁵⁷ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, pp. 157-159 and 215.

landowners and agro-exporters on one hand, and industry-based groups. Within the former group, coffee growers and stockbreeders had a prominent role. Within the later group, urban manufacturers were key. According to Uribe López, the economic policies implemented by the Colombian government between the 1970s until the 1990s, in particular the import substitution industrialization, had two main objectives.³⁵⁸ The first one was to protect domestic production, and the second one was to increase the income of coffee-growers. These two objectives constituted the pillars of the alliance between agro-exporters and industry-based groups, which are themselves the pillars of the power bloc mentioned above.³⁵⁹ This power bloc then had, and still has to date, divisions that represent different interests based on economic sectors and geographical origins. These divisions reflect the social and geographical fragmentation of Colombian society. Whilst Colombian elites have always managed to come together in the face of peasant protests and the danger of any agrarian reform, these divisions have also hindered the formation of a more democratic, unified and modern state.³⁶⁰

The anti-peasant bias and anti-communism that characterised the ideology of this power bloc find their concrete manifestation in the veto to any progressive agrarian reform, both through legal means (Law 100, 1944; Law 135, 1961; The Alliance for Progress; The Chicoral Agreement in 1972) and illegal activities (alliances with paramilitary groups and drug traffickers), as well as in the continuation of the current armed conflict. This refusal of any progressive agrarian reform and any change to elite-led development policies is part of what Mauricio Uribe Lopez has termed a systematic veto opposed by the elites to nation building.³⁶¹ A pact within the dominant power bloc between rural and industrial elites made sure that economic policies worked to their own benefit, favouring land and capital accumulation, and excluding the vast majority of the population. This dominant bloc has always been able to carry out its economic activities unaffected by the civil armed conflict. This means that neither winning the war nor making peace is one of their priorities. For the elite, the armed conflict has always been foreign and perceived as a carnage between sectarian peasants.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 235.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

³⁶¹ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, esp. pp. 190-218.

³⁶² Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*, p. 235 and 245.

Anti-peasant bias

This anti-peasant bias running throughout the twentieth century comes in support of the elites' practices and their economic interests.³⁶³ It is symbolised by the military operations against the peasant republics of Marquetalia in 1964, which eventually led to the birth of the FARC. This bias is still very present nowadays and has affected the three peasant communities under study. They have all been the target of stigmatisation and harassment by military and government officials, including the former President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe Velez. To this anti-peasant bias corresponds a similar bias against frontier land and colonisation areas, marginal spaces for which Colombian urban elites show disinterest and contempt. As Gouëset argues:

Colonization fronts and empty spaces do not constitute a national myth, a symbol of nation and state building effort (labour), a space where a common national future is being forged. Rather, for many people, these inaccessible spaces, where state authority does not manage to assert itself, appear as symbols of the "social Colombian chaos".³⁶⁴

For Gouëset, this bias is at the origin of Colombia's difficulties of territorial construction.³⁶⁵

This stigmatisation of peasant communities surfaced in different ways in the interviews conducted during my field work. When I asked them about the CdPSJA, a Lieutenant and a Captain belonging to the 17th Army Brigade in Carepa, which has jurisdiction over the Serranía de Abibe where the CdPSJA is located, answered in a very defensive tone; I had made no accusation or assumptions of any kind. They argued that peasants were noble and hardworking people who did not want anything to do with the state. They added that it was not clear why the CdPSJA refused to engage in a dialogue with state institutions. According to the Lieutenant and the Captain, this is why the state cannot help them, even though there are public policies ready to be implemented for the benefit of the CdPSJA. The Lieutenant also said that the accusations made by the community against the army were vague and incorrect. They said that the community never wants to support its claims and complaints, which is why the juridical apparatus cannot open cases based on these complaints and this explains why immunity prevails. The Lieutenant, who was also a jurist in charge of human rights issues, mentioned the legal framework that the army has to respect, in

³⁶³ López, M.U. 'Estado, democracia y violencia en América Latina', *Colombia Internacional*, 71:Enero a julio (2010), pp. 189–209.

³⁶⁴ Gouëset, V. 'El territorio colombiano y sus márgenes. La difícil tarea de la construcción territorial', *Territorios*, 1 (1999)pp. 80-81.

³⁶⁵ Gouëset, V. 'El territorio colombiano y sus márgenes', pp. 80-81.

particular the international law and the rulings of the Colombian Constitutional Court. They also stressed the fact that peace communities in Colombia do not have any legal basis. Neither, they said, do the humanitarian zones created by Afro-Colombian communities in the Urabá Chocoano. Finally, the Captain mentioned that a meeting had been held about two weeks before this interview, between national and regional authorities. Its main theme was the CdPSJA. He said that the conclusion reached was that the community's radical position makes everything very difficult. Even the regional ombudsman (*Defensor del Pueblo*) could not meet with the community.³⁶⁶

While this rich interview raised many issues, many of which I address later in this thesis, here I aim to stress the officers' tendency to blame peasants for their own situation and present the state as a benevolent actor that would willingly help peasants if only the latter let them do so. This soft version of the anti-peasant bias mentioned also reveals itself if we manage to read between the lines, precisely when the Lieutenant said that peasants do not want anything to do with the state. Indeed, the next step is usually to assimilate the CdPSJA with a nest of *guerrilleros*. Finally, the officers' apparent lack of comprehension of the position adopted by the CdPSJA towards the state appears quite inconceivable to anybody with even a minimum knowledge of the crimes that have been committed against the community over the past 20 years.

Another instance of this anti-peasant bias appeared during an interview with the Chief Intelligence Officer of the Second Division. I asked them about their perception of organisations such as the ACVC. They suggested that organisations that defend peasants' rights and represent their interests are managed by leaders who only seek their own personal benefit and manipulate peasants. The officer added that these organisations tend to make very broad accusations on the basis of isolated cases. Finally, they criticised laws that protect minorities to the detriment of the rest of the population. According to them, these laws create distinct classes of citizens. There are too many rights and not enough duties in Colombia,³⁶⁷ they said. Again, the anti-peasant bias is quite clear. In this discourse, peasants, all of whom have suffered most of the consequences of the armed conflict and have traditionally been subordinated to the power of landowners, are presented as over-protected citizens manipulated by leaders seeking their own benefits.

³⁶⁶ Army#1, XVII Brigada, Carepa, 15 April 2014.

³⁶⁷ Army#2, II Division, Bucaramanga, 22 May 2014.

The very problem that peasants are facing is then related to land accumulation and an ideology stigmatising them. The strategies of accumulation of land by dispossession implemented by the illegal armed actors and the state resulted in the enforced displacement of hundreds of thousands of peasants in Colombia. De-territorialisation and estrangement were then the problems to which these peasants tried to find a solution. These problems were the direct consequence of military strategies and operations to 'clean' the territory from any subversive and illegal presence, and assert the sovereignty of the state. But they can also be traced back to past struggles between capitalist entrepreneurs and peasants, landowners and migrant workers. Many of the peasants who are now part of these communities migrated to these regions as settlers to escape the violence they suffered in other regions or in search of a piece of land to provide for the subsistence of their family. Cycles of violence and the history of land colonisation in Colombia are interrelated processes. Control over the land meant access to power, and the forceful displacement of peasants has a long history in Colombia. The latter can be traced back to the numerous civil wars of the nineteenth century between Conservatives and Liberals in Colombia, until the paramilitary violence and land grabbing of the 1990s and 2000s. This logic of forced displacement can also be linked to a specific model of economic development, represented by the capitalist and neoliberal economic policies that have been implemented in Colombia with the active support of the state. While peasant consciousness was determined by the structural conditions of exploitation related to a capitalist mode of production, it is the lived experience of these very structural conditions that led peasant communities' members to make the decision to overtly resist the violence imposed by illegal armed actors, the state, and economic policies. In this regard, colonisation processes, social struggles, and the immediate context are the three key factors to understanding how the consciousness of peasant communities' members evolved from passive acquiescence to the refusal to accept the current state of affairs.

Peasant consciousness and colonization processes: independence, resilience, subsistence.

The reasons for settling in a new region are diverse. Migration waves have been either spontaneous, forced, or state-led. In the first instance, the search for new economic opportunities, either through the sale of their own labour power or the availability of public lands pushed peasants to migrate to new areas and extend the agrarian frontier. In the

second case, violence pushed thousands of peasants to flee, either to other rural areas or cities. In the last instance, the state developed economic projects, developed communication infrastructures, or provided new public services to connect new regions to the national market. In the Carare region, where the ATCC is located, governmental authorities promoted economic projects or measures, such as the development of bridle path networks, land titling, and the supply of social and economic subsidies, in order to encourage new settlers to occupy the widely available public lands (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación & Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011: 41).³⁶⁸ The Carare region also received new settlers fleeing the violence of the early 1950s from other regions, although the opposition between liberal guerrillas on one hand, and the army and conservative bands on the other also generated internal migration waves. After the liberal guerrillas of the 1950s capitulated and accepted the amnesties granted by President Rojas Pinilla, a former army general who took power after a coup in 1950, the municipality of Cimitarra became the centre of colonisation programmes aimed at reinserting former guerrilla members in society. In addition to former guerrilla members, a great number of peasants took advantage of the improvement of road networks and the arrival of new companies to move to the Carare region.

The patterns of colonisation and migration waves reveal the concern of frontier settlers for economic independence and for the search for new land to work. This concern is present amongst the peasants who created the peasant communities under study. It stems from a need to provide the means of subsistence for their family and gave rise to a peasant economy based on subsistence. This peasant economy which characterised frontier peasants and settlers reflects certain psychological mindsets, such as autonomy, which is also rooted in the same material need to provide for the subsistence of the family. This autonomy is related to a traditional peasant demand to be left in peace, which can be traced back to the peasant league of the 1930s and can still be heard today from the mouths of peasants. Finally, peasants whose migration was spontaneous often recall with a certain nostalgia their arrival to the regions where the peasant communities are now located. They mention the feeling of freedom that they experienced and look back to this period as one of abundance and promising new possibilities.³⁶⁹ When they arrived to a new region, peasant frontiers had to build everything anew. They faced hardship imposed by rural life in mountain and jungle

³⁶⁸ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 42.

³⁶⁹ CdP#5, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014.

areas. Due to these hard conditions, peasants built up the resilience necessary to survive on those lands. A machete and their physical qualities were their main assets to work the land and mould it according to their needs. Some would settle with their whole family. Other would first venture on their own before their family could come, once the land started to provide the necessary means of subsistence. The development plan of the ACVC illustrates this point well:

The peasants who arrived to the Cimitarra Valley in the 1950 had been expelled from their original land due to the violence of the 40s and 50s. In the vast majority of cases, they belonged to families who only could only count on their own work capabilities in order to reach into the jungle, where they had to get used to the use of axes and machetes, as traditional tools such as hoes and rakes ceased to be useful.³⁷⁰

The concern for economic independence which depends on the acquisition of land is the basis of a peasant economy based on subsistence. In this regard, labour becomes very important as the mediating element between peasant and land. Through labour, peasants would work on the land and provide for the needs of their families. This insistence on labour takes on a particular meaning and is elevated to the rank of value. The right to work is one of the three rights that constitute the slogan of the ATCC, along with the right to life and the right to dignity, while the CdPSJA is organised in working groups whose function is to fulfil the economic and social needs of the community.

In all three regions, members of peasant communities usually look back at the colonisation process, either because they have memories of it or because their parents told them about it, as one which was full of wealth and open to promising new opportunities in spite of the hard living conditions. The Serrania de Abibe, where the CdPSJA is located, was considered a haven where they would be able to get hold of a small parcel of land and build a family. Members of the CdPSJA usually come from three different backgrounds. Some of them are peasants who migrated to the region of Urabá in the 1950s or 1960s from Cordoba or Antioquia.³⁷¹ Others came from the villages and settlements situated along the *via al mar* from Medellín to Turbo, and were involved in the trade unions and political movements of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.³⁷² Finally, some were originally born in the Serrania de Abibe itself and have locally been displaced by the armed actors present in the region.³⁷³ One of

³⁷⁰ ACVC, 'Plan de desarrollo'.

³⁷¹ CdP#5.

³⁷² CdP#2, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014; CdP#1, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014.

³⁷³ CdP#4, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014.

them recalls that he was ‘born in a municipality which was called Dabeiba [...] But they brought me to this zone when I was a small child, and I have always been a peasant like this, I was brought up in the countryside’. Asked about why they migrated to this region, he said that ‘they [his fathers], even though very poor (...) could move without any problem to any areas and could divinely start working here.’³⁷⁴ The quasi-absence of violence is also mentioned by one of the founding members of the ATCC who arrived to the Carare region in 1961.³⁷⁵ ‘There was no violence’, he says, before going on to stress the wealth of the land: ‘Most of us arrived here in the Carare region, because it is a very good land, which gave a lot of bananas, corn, rice.’³⁷⁶ Food was available in abundance, and peasants could make economic gains.³⁷⁷ Members of the ATCC recall how they could pick the piece of land they wanted and chose its size, but had to consult with the oldest settlers in order to determine the limits and edges of their plot. Once they had built a home and reached some kind of stability, they would be joined by their family or form a family on their new land.³⁷⁸ A particular social order then started to emerge, with its economies, solidarities, and conflicts.³⁷⁹

Settlers started to organise this social order according to different criteria. The first layer was constituted by the oldest families of the region, around which other layers were formed and to which other families or production centres had to pay services and loyalty. Another group of settlers was formed by day labourers, dominated by traders and merchants. Social life was organised around production and economic needs.³⁸⁰ Associations and organisations were born out of the need to develop these social and economic relations. But the Juntas de Accion Comunales³⁸¹ and the several churches present in the region also played an organisational role in regulating social life and arbitrating social conflicts.³⁸² When the FARC arrived to the Carare region in 1966, it tried to impose its political structure on this existing social order and took up several of the social functions assumed by other

³⁷⁴ CdP#5.

³⁷⁵ ATCC#11, La India, 9 May 2014.

³⁷⁶ ATCC#11.

³⁷⁷ Cited in Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación & Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011: 46.

³⁷⁸ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, ‘El orden desarmado’, pp. 45-46.

³⁷⁹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, ‘El orden desarmado’, p. 48.

³⁸⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, ‘El orden desarmado’, p. 50.

³⁸¹ The JAC are the basic unit of social organisation at the village or community level. Their purpose is to promote the economic development and individual and collective wellbeing of their members.

³⁸² Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, ‘El orden desarmado’, pp 50-52.

organisations. The FARC found in the Carare region a stable rear-guard, even though the population has traditionally followed liberal and conservative political allegiances.³⁸³

In 1975, the army created the battalion Rafael Reyes in Cimitarra, and installed a military based in La India. But the state military presence did not offer any solution to the social problems faced by the population and furthered the crisis of the state's legitimacy. The situation deteriorated even more with the arrival of paramilitary groups in 1983, and the Law of the Silence became the norm within the population. This increase in the intensity of the armed conflicts damaged the social fabric of the population, severed the existing solidarity networks and turned upside down the social organisations that were born out of settlement processes. Only the leaders who opposed resistance to the armed groups conserved the adhesion of all the population.³⁸⁴ While the several waves of colonisation and settlers and the social fabric which was born out of them form the long-term contextual background of the creation of the ATCC, the deterioration of the armed conflicts and the emergence of leaders represent the immediate context in which the ATCC was born. In the 1980s, faced with increased violence, displacements of population, and problems related to land tenure and the concentration of land, the peasants of the Carare region began to manifest their discontent and concerns through protests, complaints, and rallies.³⁸⁵

These social and cultural experiences played an important role in the formation of peasants' consciousness and the conception of the world symbolised by peasant communities. Values such as resilience, autonomy, dignity, and hard work find their roots in these experiences of hardship and social relations of solidarity between peasants. They are tied to a peasant economy based on subsistence which also informs the political economy of peasant communities. This colonisation process was a direct consequence of the process of primitive accumulation of land, land concentration, and dispossession of peasant frontiers analysed earlier. In the second half of the twentieth century, the implementation of vast economic projects further worsened the situation of peasants in the Urabá and Magdalena Medio regions. They led to social and labour conflicts within the banana crop industry in Urabá, and the exploitation of oil in Magdalena Medio. These conflicts also informed the development of a specific peasant consciousness and identity that led to the birth of the

³⁸³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 52.

³⁸⁴ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 54-55.

³⁸⁵ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 55.

peasant initiatives under study. These social and political conflicts informed peasants' perceptions of their own material situation and contributed to their political culture. It is to these processes that I now turn.

The rise of a peasant consciousness: social and political struggles over land

In addition to colonisation processes, the social, political, and military struggles over land and labour rights had a strong influence on the consciousness of peasant communities' members, which remained a fragmented common sense, though. This reminds us that for Gramsci 'the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic',³⁸⁶ and 'intertwined with that of civil society' and 'states and groups of states'.³⁸⁷ These struggles informed the political cultures which peasants have inherited and are nowadays reflected in the attitudes of the peasant communities under study towards the illegal armed actors, the state, and the market.

Peasant resistance movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were born out of the agricultural entrepreneurs' attempts to acquire labour and assert their rights over large parts of public lands. LeGrand claims that 'out of this form of labour and peasant resistance to it emerged one major thread of rural protest ideology that continues alive in the Colombian countryside to the present day' (LeGrand, 1984: 28). She suggests that tensions between landlords and frontier peasants were and still are informed by changes in the socio-economic and institutional environment (LeGrand, 1984: 47). She argues that 'the roots of this social tension must be sought in the process of frontier expansion and particularly in the form of labor acquisition associated with it in the period 1870-1930' (LeGrand, 1984: 47). This period saw the growth of the export economy in the middle altitudes and lowlands of Colombia, which in turn stimulated the concurrent expansion of an independent, market-oriented peasantry in nearby frontier regions (LeGrand, 1984: 33). In the years after 1875, peasants started to organise to resist encroachment, by refusing to sign tenancy agreements or leave their land (LeGrand, 1984: 37). Progressive laws attempting to reform land ownership had a strong impact on the settler's perception of their own situation (LeGrand, 1984: 38). According to LeGrand, 'It gave them the sense that the national government was on their side, it imbued their interests with legitimacy, and it provided a focal point around

³⁸⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 52.

³⁸⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 54-55.

which they began to organize in their own defense'.³⁸⁸ While frontier peasants' resistance was not successful in the vast majority of cases,

...the landlords' apparent success could not, however, obliterate the settlers' memory of the experience through which they had passed. The fact of dispossession, which touched so many peasant families, imbued them with a personal conviction of the illegitimacy of the properties on which they worked and an underlying resentment against the landlords. This rural consciousness lay inactive until structural changes in the 1920s provided the peasants with leverage to renew their struggles against the predominance of the great estate.³⁸⁹

A counter-offensive of the peasantry against landowners occurred in the 1930s because of the intervention of the state and the agrarian policies it adopted. The strong economic growth of the 1920s was followed by an economic depression and a sudden pauperisation which would influence these peasant protests. Conflicts turned around the contractual conditions of peasants working in the haciendas and the search for new pieces of land. While tenants sought to improve their working conditions, peasant settlers started occupying the land of new haciendas.³⁹⁰ The connections established between growing socialist movements and peasant protests in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the spreading of agrarian movements, and weakened the control of hacienda owners over peasants, who then started to take action outside traditional political parties. However, attempts by socialist groups to influence peasant protests and demands also led to a fragmentation of peasant movements.³⁹¹ It pushed the Liberal party to take an interest in peasant demands, which was reflected by some of the measures taken by the Olaya Herrera administration, such as the creation of rural unions tied to the Liberal party as an instrument for the progressive transformation of rural areas. The policies of land fragmentation and distribution promoted by the same administration also led to the demobilisation of peasant movements and to the restoration of the control of the traditional parties.³⁹² Four decades later, similar peasant protests and land invasions happened under the impulsion of the National Association of Peasant Users (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos – ANUC). Created in 1968 by the then President of Colombia Carlos Lleras Restrepo in order to promote an agrarian reform from below, the ANUC played a key role in organising peasant movements

³⁸⁸ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 38.

³⁸⁹ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 41.

³⁹⁰ González, F.E. *Poder*, pp. 229-231.

³⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 229-231.

³⁹² González, F.E. *Poder*, p. 263.

in the 1970s.³⁹³ The marches, protests and land invasions organised by the ANUC soon got out of control of the state, but they lost momentum from 1972 onward due to the ANUC's own internal divisions, but also in the face of both military and landowner-led repression.³⁹⁴ The ANUC lost touch with its base, and around 1978 the peasant-led struggles against agrarian elites were over and the ANUC was left in a state of crisis that considerably affected the strength of peasant protests.³⁹⁵ The demise of the ANUC also illustrated the significant power of landowners in Colombia and the considerable strength of agrarian capitalism.³⁹⁶

Whilst the ANUC played a key role in the formation of a peasant consciousness, it was in the 1930s that the formulation of a rural protest ideology centred on the issue of public land initially developed.³⁹⁷ The idea that frontier land and public land belong first and foremost to those who work it was born. It was also in the 1930s that socialist ideas started to influence peasant communities, a phenomenon which would grow under the influence of the Communist party and the ideological influence of the guerrillas, in particular in the regions where the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC were born. The ideas of dignity and autonomy were strong components of the struggle led by the peasant leagues of the 1930s. The strikes of the 1920s, the squatter movements of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the conflicts of the Violencia, the conflicts between workers and trade unions and companies from the 1960s onward, the land invasions incited by the ANUC in the 1970s, and the peasant protest of the 1990s in reaction to paramilitary violence are all manifestations of a same problem that finds its origins in the social relations of production, the agrarian problem, and exclusion of subaltern groups from political participation. Actors change, but the issues at stake are the same. The three regions under study have witnessed these conflicts surrounding the use and ownership of the land.

In Urabá, where the CdPSJA was born in 1997, these political, armed, and social and economic conflicts have influenced peasants' consciousness since the 1960s. This region was the target of several development projects in the 1970s and 1980s to try and connect its economy to the core economic centres of the country. These industrial projects brought about important transformations to both the traditional agrarian structures and economy, as

³⁹³ Palacios, M., and Safford, F. *Historia de Colombia. Pais fragmentado, sociedad dividida* (Bogotá, Ediciones Uniandes, 2013), p. 472.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ González, F.E. *Poder*, p. 367.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ LeGrand, C. 'Labor Acquisition', p. 46.

well as to the demographic growth of the population, which had a direct impact on peasants' lives. They favoured monoculture and permanent crops over a traditional peasant economy. This led to the displacement of peasant populations away from the banana axis, but gave rise to the urban network surrounding this axis as well.³⁹⁸ However, the injection of private capital further weakened the state presence and strengthened the isolation of the region. Today, activities related to drug trafficking and the confrontation between armed groups are the prevailing source of violence, but conflicts in the region first turned around the relationship between workers and employers. These conflictive relationships were apparently mainly labour-related and characterised by industrial actions. However, employers used to say that the conflict was not related to labour, which indicates that something more was at stake.³⁹⁹ Progressively, other actors such as political parties, the state and the army, the guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and drug traffickers, appeared and gave shape to the political and military conflicts that still strike the region today. Guerrillas first appeared in Urabá in the 1960s.⁴⁰⁰ They started to indoctrinate peasants and accompany colonisation waves,⁴⁰¹ but a radical change happened in 1974 when the FARC's influence spread over the whole region. This triggered a strong reaction from the army and state security entities.⁴⁰²

Between 1966 and 1980, the conflict between the state army and the guerrillas was first purely military and located at the periphery of the banana axis. From 1980 onward, this dynamic started to change. The labour-related and military conflicts then became interrelated.⁴⁰³ During the 1980s, trade-union and labour-related conflicts were closely linked to the conflicts between the FARC and *the Popular Liberation Army* (EPL) and their urban militias,⁴⁰⁴ to such extent that the EPL, a former leftist guerrilla group, ended up working for entrepreneurs and collaborating with state entities.⁴⁰⁵ Towards the end of the 1980s, entrepreneurs felt concerned and threatened by Communist influence, trade union movements, and the violence between guerrillas. Burnyeat explains that this is when the Urabá region was re-imagined as a region with natural resources that had to be exploited in

³⁹⁸ García de la Torre, C.I. and Aramburo Siegert, C.I. (eds.), *Geografías de la guerra*, pp. 280 and 290-291.

³⁹⁹ García de la Torre, C.I. *Urabá*, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁰⁰ Botero Herrera, F. *Urabá*, p. 138.

⁴⁰¹ García de la Torre, C.I. and Aramburo Siegert, C.I. (eds.), *Geografías de la guerra*, p. 300.

⁴⁰² García de la Torre, C.I. *Urabá*, pp. 139-143.

⁴⁰³ García de la Torre, C.I. *Urabá*, p. 139.

⁴⁰⁴ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 46.

⁴⁰⁵ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 48.

order to connect its regional market to international trade and the global economy.⁴⁰⁶ This gave rise to several unrealised economic projects aimed at developing communication systems, such as the interoceanic canal or the Pan-American Highway. This imaginary, very much alive today as the Strategic Plan for the 2011–2020 period, forms the justification of entrepreneurs' efforts to bring back order and impose capitalist forms of production and exploitation in Urabá through the use of terror and the support of paramilitary groups.

The 1990s saw the emergence of the paramilitary groups, both in Urabá and at national level. The Córdoba and Urabá United Self-Defense Groups (ACCU) grew around 1993 and 1994 and would eventually unite with other paramilitary groups to form the Colombian United Self-Defense Groups (AUC) in 1997. In addition, what can be characterised as state-sponsored paramilitary groups were created by law in 1994 in the Department of Antioquia, whose governor at the time was Alvaro Uribe Velez, who would become President in 2002.⁴⁰⁷ The Special Services of Surveillance and Private Security, or *convivir*, received the support of General Rito Alejo del Río, then Chief Commander of the 17th Army Brigade created in 1993 to conduct counter-insurgency operations in Urabá. These developments triggered the highest level of confrontation and violence ever seen in the region. Paramilitary groups' actions, usually in collusion with the state armed forces, put an end to the presence and influence of leftist political parties such as the Communist Party and the *Union Patriótica*, and to the guerrillas' domination as well. Between 1995 and 1997, paramilitary groups committed several massacres which led to the massive displacement of thousands of people. The massacre of the leaders of the Balsamar cooperative, located where the main settlement of the CdPSJA now is, also has a symbolic meaning in the memory of the peace community's members, many of whom participated in the cooperative. The Balsamar cooperative came to symbolise a very specific model of peasant-based development and economy, created in 1985 with the support of the Dutch. It promoted values such as autonomous labour and trade, the empowerment of peasants, and a development model closely connected to the leftist political project led by the Patriotic Union political movement in the region.⁴⁰⁸ These values are the very reasons its leaders were assassinated. All these elements are to be found in the critical consciousness developed by the CdPSJA. Similarly, many members of the

⁴⁰⁶ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 45.

⁴⁰⁷ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 187.

⁴⁰⁸ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 42.

CdPSJA have been involved in the Patriotic Union political movement,⁴⁰⁹ whose economic and political models have strongly influenced the creation of the Peace Community.⁴¹⁰

In the Magdalena Medio region, the beginning of oil exploitation catalysed the first waves of colonisation of the twentieth century and led to the creation of Barrancabermeja. Oil exploitation also determined the evolution of economic development and social conflicts in the whole region.⁴¹¹ From the mid-1950s onward, violence, the armed conflict, and the struggle for land conditioned the most recent waves of colonisation.⁴¹² Social, political, and economic conflicts reflected the exclusion of peasants from the appropriation of natural resources and access to land. The state has been unable to manage these conflicts and implement political and social reforms which would benefit all social groups. The proliferation of armed groups and the emergence of drug trafficking in the 1980s lead to new types of violence and the displacement of thousands of peasants to urban centres.⁴¹³

The Magdalena Medio region, where the ACVC is located, possesses large natural wealth and resources, including coca crops, gold, cattle-breeding farms, agribusiness, and most of all, oil. The control of these resources is a key factor for explaining the high level of violence in the region. From the 1980s onward, the drug-trafficking business in the Magdalena Medio region brought about a change in the use of land and favoured the concentration of private property in the hands of extensive cattle farm owners. Cattle farming activities replaced agriculture and cattle farmers got hold of the most arable lands. Drug traffickers also bought a huge amount of land to launder their money and gain territorial control in collaboration with paramilitary groups and cattle farmers. This resulted in the formation of large and unproductive stretches of land in order to prevent the fragmentation of land in the hands of individual peasants. The latter were then displaced towards more unfertile lands.⁴¹⁴ As in Urabá, labour-related conflicts have a long history. But while in Urabá the main economic activities were related to the cultivation of banana, in the Magdalena

⁴⁰⁹ CdP#1; 'The Union Patriótica or Patriotic Union (UP) is a leftist political party that was co-founded by the guerrilla group, the FARC, in the mid-1980's and was the victim of systematic disappearances and assassinations in the late 80's and early 90's', Colombia Reports, 'Patriotic Union' 13 January 2014. Available at: <https://colombiareports.com/patriotic-union-union-patriotica/> (25 May 2017).

⁴¹⁰ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, pp. 40-41.

⁴¹¹ Molano, A. *En medio del Magdalena Medio* (Bogotá, CINEP, 2009) p. 27.

⁴¹² Archila, M. et al. (eds.) *Conflictos, Poderes E Identidades En El Magdalena Medio, 1990-2001*, Bogotá, COLCIENCIAS Colombia, 2006) pp. 39-40.

⁴¹³ Centro de investigaciones para el desarrollo, 'Evaluación externa del segundo crédito de aprendizaje e innovación (LIL II) del Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio' Informe final (Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Diciembre de 2003).

⁴¹⁴ Archila, M. et al. (eds.) *Conflictos*, p. 44.

Medio region the economy was dominated by oil extraction and refinery in Barrancabermeja, Yondo, and Cantagallo, and palm oil in Southern Bolivar. As in Urabá, these labour-related conflicts came to be closely linked to the dynamics of the armed conflicts between guerrillas, paramilitary, and the state. The Magdalena Medio region played an instrumental role in the emergence of paramilitary groups. It was indeed one of the first centres of expansion of the paramilitary phenomenon, which grew out of the *Puerto Boyacá* model in the 1980s.⁴¹⁵ Owned by the state in the nineteenth century, the land where the municipality of Puerto Boyacá is today located was bought in 1927 by an oil company, the Texas Petroleum Company (TPC). Backed by the state, TPC managed to extend its activities by buying or occupying the land of peasant settlers, and started exploiting in 1946. The demographic and economic growth of the region was then determined by activities related to the exploitation of oil. The following decades saw the emergence of social conflicts between TPC and the peasants, the arrival of the FARC in the 1970s, and eventually the counter-insurgency reaction that gave birth to the paramilitary project in Puerto Boyacá at the beginning of the 1980s.⁴¹⁶

But the region was also key to the FARC expansion in the 1970s.⁴¹⁷ As in Urabá, the FARC expansion followed the colonisation process led by peasant migrants. The 4th Front was created and later replaced by the 11th Front. The 1970s and above all the 1980s saw a strengthening of the FARC presence in the southern part of the Magdalena Medio region.⁴¹⁸ However, challenged by the emergence of paramilitary groups in Puerto Boyacá from the mid-1980s, the FARC had to retreat to the northern part of the region where it created new fronts, in particular in the Cimitarra River Valley, in South Bolivar, and in the Chucurí zone.⁴¹⁹ In the 1990s, weakened by the activities of paramilitary, drug traffickers, and army operations, the FARC concentrated its control in the mountain ranges and forests of the periphery of the Magdalena Medio, especially the Serranía de San Lucas, the Cimitarra Valley River, and the eastern mountain ranges of the Oriente Antioqueño.⁴²⁰ While maintaining its presence in the Serranía de San Lucas, the FARC faced a strong paramilitary and military offensive in the years

⁴¹⁵ Archila, M. et al. (eds.) *Conflictos*, pp. 51-58; Dávila Saad, A. *La violencia en el Magdalena Medio: análisis de la dinámica espacial* (Bogotá, Universidad de los Andes, 2010); Molano, A. *En medio*, p. 46.

⁴¹⁶ Molano, A. *En medio*, pp. 46-54.

⁴¹⁷ Molano, A. *En medio*, p. 50.

⁴¹⁸ The south of the Magdalena Medio region belongs geographically and culturally to the Andes mountain range, while the north belongs to the savannah of the Santander Department.

⁴¹⁹ Dávila Saad, A. *La violencia*, pp. 33-34.

⁴²⁰ Dávila Saad, A. *La violencia*, p. 35.

2000 and 2001. It was then further weakened and confined to peripheral areas in the Cimitarra River Valley, South Cesar, South Bolivar, and Cimitarra.⁴²¹

Even though the ACVC was formally created in 1996, the social, economic and political movement that led to its birth can be traced back to the 1980s, and even the 1940s. It is intimately linked to peasants' resistance against the various interests of several actors to assert their social, economic, and military control over the land. From the creation of the peasant leagues in the 1940s onward, the peasant population started to organise around the defence of its interests.⁴²² A few peasant leaders began to promote the development of a peasant economy. This organisational process led to the creation of community shops or cooperatives, each of which was coordinated by an administrative council and an administrator. These community shops and cooperatives then became the centre of this economy based on exchange and barter. In addition, in the 1960s the ANUC encouraged the occupation of lands as a protest tool, and the Peasant Coordination of the Magdalena Medio (Coordinadora Campesina del Magdalena Medio) promoted peasant protest in Southern Bolivar.⁴²³ Protests and rallies were organised in 1985, 1987, and 1988, in the municipalities surrounding Barrancabermeja, and in the north-eastern part of the Department, to ask for basic public services, the respect of human rights, and fight for the defence of the land. Several peasant-led organisations managed to mobilise up to 120 000 people, but eventually faced the full force of state repression.⁴²⁴ This peasant mobilisation continued during the 1990s. About 90 protests were reported, organised around claims for better infrastructure, credits, the devolution of stolen land, and the denunciation of human rights violations committed by the army and paramilitary groups.⁴²⁵

At the beginning of the 1990s, several landowners of the region began to feel threatened by the organisational and economic strength of this peasant-led process, and targeted the cooperatives.⁴²⁶ This is also when the violence caused by the confrontation between the state, paramilitary groups, and the guerrillas reached a peak and caused massive displacements of population. The peasants of the region then started to speak out and organise protests in order to urge the government to pay attention to their situation. In 1996,

⁴²¹ Dávila Saad, A. *La violencia*, pp. 36-37.

⁴²² Archila, M. et al. (eds.) *Conflictos*, p. 46.

⁴²³ Archila, M. et al. (eds.) *Conflictos*, p. 46.

⁴²⁴ Molano, A. *En medio*, pp. 54-55.

⁴²⁵ Molano, A. *En medio*, pp. 60-61.

⁴²⁶ Molano, A. *En medio*.

two marches were organised that led to the signing of agreements with the government in San Pablo and Barrancabermeja, around the need for social, economic, and agrarian reforms. Unfortunately, none of these agreements was implemented. This and additional paramilitary group actions led peasant-led movements to what they named the exodus of 1998. This exodus lasted for 103 days and mobilised around 10 000 peasants. The outcome was the signing of new agreements with the government on 4 October 1998. In addition to renewed social and economic commitments, the government reaffirmed its willingness to strengthen the fight against paramilitary groups and their supporters in the Magdalena Medio region.⁴²⁷

Finally, the Carare region⁴²⁸, where the ATCC is located, has been identified under different names since the Spanish colonisation – *isla del Carare*, *Carare-Opon*, *Provincia de Velez*, and more recently, *Nucleo provincial del Carare*. Spanish colonisation caused the displacement of the indigenous population Carares, Nauras, and Nauracotas. Isolated and sparsely populated until the eighteenth century, the Carare region was progressively populated, in response to the needs of new routes connected to the Magdalena Medio River, even before the Independence of Colombia. Thanks to its strategic location linking the Atlantic Ocean to the Province of Antioquia, its natural and agricultural resources, and its communication roads, new settlements were established in the nineteenth century around the trade of wood and tobacco. The construction of new roads and the exploitation of oil gave a new impulse to the growth of the region at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the 1940s onward, the Carare region saw several surges of colonisation arriving to its lands, first in an attempt to exploit wood, cultivate cocoa, rice, and vegetables, under the direction of departmental authorities. Settler Associations were created around economic activities. Then, people fleeing the violence caused by the confrontation between the Liberal and Conservative parties in the 1950s migrated to the Carare region. In the same decade, under the presidency of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1952-1958), the government launched new economic projects to develop the mining industry and road networks, and attract new settlers to the Carare region in search of new economic opportunities.⁴²⁹ The settlement where the heart of the ATCC is located, La India, became one of the most important outposts of the

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ For a full historical background on the Carare region, see Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 25-66.

⁴²⁹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 33-43.

region, one of the main economic centres for the trade of banana and wood, and the home of the Adventist Church.⁴³⁰

These struggles between peasants and landowners ended up being resolved through tentative agrarian reforms that eventually favoured landowners and rural elites, and precipitated the incorporation of free labour at the service of extractive industries or caused further displacements of peasants.⁴³¹ But the struggle for land reform hit a low at the end of the 1970s and left the main peasant organisation in a severe crisis. This crisis would end up annihilating peasant protests, including within its most radical sectors.⁴³² In many ways, the peasants who started the initiatives under study inherited from this history of struggles and resistance. They inherited particular values, ideologies, and consciousness that would eventually find their reflection in the creation of peace communities or associations. But this consciousness was not enough alone to lead to the creation of these peasant communities as they are now. The extreme violence provoked by the armed confrontation between the state, paramilitary groups, and guerrillas, placed peasants in an untenable situation that left them with no choice but come up with a radical solution.

'We had no choice'

In all three instances, the creation of particular institutions to protect themselves and defend their rights coincided with a situation of extreme violence. In Urabá, massive displacements occurred during 1996 and 1997, following large-scale military operations both in the valleys and the Serrania de Abibe. In the Magdalena Medio region, paramilitary violence overwhelmed peasants' settlements. One of the first ACVC settlements, La Cooperativa, was burnt in 1996 by paramilitary groups. Finally, in the Carare River Valley, peasants recall the terrifying number of human bodies that could be seen in the river every day. The general feeling was that peasants could not cope anymore. This feeling usually led them to say that they had no choice but to organise. In the Carare region, this decision was triggered by the ultimatum that the army, in collusion with paramilitary groups, gave to the population. This is how one of the peasants describe the dead-end in which the population found itself, and the ultimatum issued by the army:

⁴³⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 44.

⁴³¹ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 164.

⁴³² González, F.E. *Poder*, pp. 366-367.

Well, the idea of creating the ATCC... Well, that does not... does not arise from an intentionality as such, as in 'let's organise in order to create an organisation' [...] The ATCC arose out of an immediate reaction that had to be taken in a crucial moment, in which the armed actors placed civilians in the obligation to make a commitment. But it does not arise like 'let's organise to provide an answer', but in order to make a decision... Let's put it like that, at the crossroads in which the conflict was in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, that left the whole country and even more concretely the Magdalena Medio region [...] in a situation characterised by facts that happened then. Eh... in the year 1987, after the armed actors killed many peasants, killings which reached the number of 500, maybe more than 600, well, killed peasants. Some areas were bombarded as well. So before... In La India, which was kind of the central, eh... market place for peasants in the region, paramilitary men and army men took advantage of one of the market days, in order to eh... give an ultimatum to the peasants. So, they concentrated them in the public square, and told them 'You have three months to decide. You take arms as guerrilla members, you join the paramilitary groups, you take arms in the army, you leave the region, or you die.' That was the origin, that is to say, there was three months for us peasants to decide what we would do. Seize weapons, as guerrilla or paramilitary members, or leave the region, because if you don't you would end up like many others before, like many peasants who had been killed.'⁴³³

This quotation, worth citing at length, is interesting because of the interactions between agency, consciousness, and structures that can be found at play in this story. It is as if peasants of the Carare region were awoken from their passivity by the dead-end in which they found themselves. The structural conditions of violence imposed by armed actors had left them with no choice but to make a choice.

Paradoxically then, faced with no choice, the peasants found the resources to come up with an alternative that symbolises the transition from passiveness to action and stresses the importance of labour. Another member of the ATCC explains that another displacement was not a viable option: 'When we saw this alternative, well, we... where do we go? (...) a family that would go to Bogotá, as busy as this city is [...], would only suffer, endure hard conditions.'⁴³⁴ The same peasant goes on to say: 'So we said no. What we have to do is arm ourselves with values. (...) We will arm ourselves with values, and arm ourselves with working tools, shovels, pikes and the rest, to cultivate the land, work on the land.'⁴³⁵ But this ultimatum was not the only event that led peasants to find a choice where there was seemingly none. The extreme violence caused by the presence of the FARC, paramilitary groups, and the army became unbearable. The most shocking stories focus on the number of bodies going down the river. But peasants' accounts of the period preceding the creation of the ATCC are also filled with stories of harassments caused by all armed actors. Many of them recall the events connected to the 'carnetisation' campaign led by the army. The army asked all individuals living in La India to be identified. They gave everybody a 'carnet' to replace

⁴³³ ATCC#3, La India, 7 May 2014.

⁴³⁴ ATCC#2, La India, 7 May 2014.

⁴³⁵ ATCC#2.

their official ID cards in an attempt to control the population and prevent any collaboration with the FARC. This carnet was granted for a specific number of days depending on whether the army thought the individual was suspicious or not. Some had to renew their carnet every 3 days, some every 15 days. Considering that the journey to the military base cost money and could take up to a day for some peasants, this represented a huge burden for them. Humiliations also took place at the military base itself when peasants came to renew their carnets.⁴³⁶

In the Urabá region, the level of violence reached its peak in the years 1996 and 1997 and also led members of the CdPSJA to come to the conclusion that there was no other option but to organise to survive in the midst of the armed conflict.⁴³⁷ According to one of the leaders of the CdPSJA, the counter-insurgency and military operation led by the army against the FARC did not lead to its defeat. It led instead to the 'total extermination of the Patriotic Union' – a political party born out of the peace negotiation between the government and the FARC in the 1980s and representing the political interests of the latter – and 'to raze all peasants and indiscriminately displace [them]'.⁴³⁸ This leader carried on to say that staying on their land 'was only the only way to resist'.⁴³⁹ 'There was no other option', he said, 'because at the end of the day we are peasants who have not studied, and we will not go to the city just to starve'.⁴⁴⁰ He added: 'This is what we had to do. We had to join forces and if they kill us, at least they will kill us together, but there is no other option'.⁴⁴¹

The conviction of being at a dead-end was also accompanied by a feeling of general tiredness due to the level of violence reached and the indiscriminate character of the armed actors' reprisals against the population. Peasants' recollection of the problem they were facing before the creation of the peace community, ZRC, or association, is often rooted in concrete instances of violent episodes. One of the members of the CdPSJA recalls *la derrota*,⁴⁴² when he had to leave his home to find refuge in San José de Apartadó because of paramilitary violence. When I asked him to tell me his story, Don Alberto asked me whether he should start at the very beginning, from the moment he called *la derrota*, (the defeat)?

⁴³⁶ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 53.

⁴³⁷ CdP#1.

⁴³⁸ CdP#11.

⁴³⁹ CdP#11.

⁴⁴⁰ CdP#11.

⁴⁴¹ CdP#11.

⁴⁴² CdP#3, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014.

Don Alberto was referring to the very day he left his home because of violence caused by the activity of paramilitary groups and the army. Before this day, Don Alberto said that he and his brother lived quietly in the vereda Las Playas, part of the corregimiento of Caracoli. Guerrilla and paramilitary groups were nowhere to be seen. He recalled the bombings that started while he was cooking breakfast. The army was conducting a counterinsurgency operation in collaboration with paramilitary groups in an effort to take control of the region. Caught between air bombings, paramilitary checkpoints preventing them reaching the nearest main city, Apartadó, and rumours and stories of raids against other peasants' properties and possessions, Don Alberto and his brother did not know what to do. They finally met another group of people, including children, who were fleeing as well. Together they managed to reach San José de Apartadó, a village situated about a 50 minutes' drive from Apartadó. They were given a farm to share, but paramilitary groups soon raided the farm, killed all the animals, and set fire to the ranch. Don Alberto identified this very moment as the beginning of his resistance:

It turned out that they took all the beasts, the cows as well. And they set fire to the ranch. They ate the pigs, ate the chickens, and set fire to the ranch and there was nothing left. They left us poor. Right. And from this moment onward, we started to resist.⁴⁴³

It is interesting to note that Don Alberto identified the beginning of his resistance with a situation where he had nothing to lose. This also seems to imply that there was no choice. Anywhere they went, they would find war and violence. They had to find another way. Another testimony confirms this view:

Seeing that the situation was getting worse every day and that we had to find alternative ways of living to be able to live in the midst of this war, it (the creation of the community) was speeded up, it was speeded up before and even more to create the community.⁴⁴⁴

Peasants had to find a way to stay on the land, their only chance to successfully resist. As a community, they

..organised with this purpose in mind, to resist, because we were finally aware that we were not being respected, but we bet on resisting in the midst of the armed confrontation, and wishing that, well, at least we would show to the world, that another way, a different way, is possible, but that in the end the system, the global world model, do not let us. But that it is possible because we are a community, we are a group of alive peasants, human beings who live in the midst of this situation, then yes, it is possible, but the system do not allow it due to the huge interests.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ CdP#3.

⁴⁴⁴ CdP#1.

⁴⁴⁵ CdP#9, San José de Apartadó, 18 de April 2014.

The creation of these communities was a direct reaction to this extreme situation and the conditions analysed so far. They are the final result of a reflection on the practical question 'What do we do'? The collective dynamics which were born out of these reflections implied the need to challenge what Gramsci calls 'common sense', the conception of the world and the ideas informed by the ideologies that ruling elites' use in order to cement their hegemony and preserve their economic interests. In their concrete situation, this common sense was not only imposed by the state but also by the very structural conditions imposed on them by the armed conflict. Challenging common sense, and freeing themselves from a certain fatalism regarding their situation, allowed peasants to make a choice where there was seemingly none. It also favoured the emergence of a critical collective consciousness, an awareness of being part of a bigger community, which would enable them to survive in the midst of armed conflict.

From economic-corporate struggles to struggles for hegemony

Challenging common sense amounted to redefining the doable.⁴⁴⁶ For Gramsci, workers were to some extent more alienated at the level of ideas than at the level of practice. The situation of Colombian peasants in the 1990s is without any doubt different to that of Italian workers in the 1920s. But the peasants who formed peasant communities chose not to displace themselves but to enlarge the field of possible actions, which at first sight seemed unrealistic. They did not act according to what was possible, but redefined the doable. They sought to transform the conditions imposed on them by the armed actors, the state and neoliberal policies, and developed new principles and discourse in order to survive in the midst of armed conflict. This is well illustrated by an anecdote that preceded the creation of the CdPSJA, related by Aparicio.⁴⁴⁷ When paramilitary violence reached its highest peak in the Serranía de Abibe in 1996, thousands of peasants had to flee. Then Mayor of Apartadó, Gloria Cuartas, decided to send buses and trucks to allow the peasants who had been pushed into the settlement of San José de Apartadó to leave the area. Cuartas wanted to take them to safer areas, for fear they be forced to flee again or even killed. However, both the leaders and peasants refused to get on the buses and leave. They would rather stay in San José de

⁴⁴⁶ Arditi, B. *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁴⁴⁷ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 264.

Apartadó, and run the risk of being killed than to leave their homes. This is echoed by Father Javier Giraldo, a priest who has been involved with the CdPSJA since its inception and is now one of its leaders and organic intellectuals. He recalled that during the week following the creation of the community, the reaction of all armed actors in general and the army in particular was incredibly violent. The army conducted air raids against the various settlements of the community and pushed thousands of peasants to flee and leave their hamlets:

So in this moment (the week following the creation of the community), the peasants found refuge in the hamlet of San José. And there many of them flew, flew where they had family members, flew to other regions of the country, to look for... But a small group of peasants remained of more than... I have always calculated that more than 800 people, right. And these were the ones who made a pact of resistance, not to be expelled, even though they had to be killed, but not to abandon their land. Well, in spite of the aggression which was so strong at this time, and the fact that there were many dead people, air raids and all the threats, and in spite of that, here, there was a pact of resistance. They imposed one condition, that we (the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace, of which Father Giraldo was the director) accompany them 24h per day. And the commission of Justice and Peace accompanied them with a small but permanent team, which was always there with them. So this gave them some strength and they organised the resistance, that is to say, to resist was not to be displaced. Even though they be killed.⁴⁴⁸

Another anecdote related to the ATCC illustrates this same refusal to accept the options that were imposed on them, to refuse any form of fatalism, and to make a choice that would open new possibilities and redefine what was doable. In May 1987, an ultimatum was sent to the peasants of the Carare region by the army and the paramilitary groups. The latter gathered the population of La India in the central square of the village to tell them that they now had three options. They could either join them or the guerrillas, leave the region, or die. This moment is recalled as a turning point in the collective memory of the ATCC. Faced with what looked like a dead-end, some peasants, led by a few leaders, started to engage in discussions about possible alternatives to the ultimatum that had been imposed upon them. This is when they came up with the idea of engaging in dialogue with all the armed actors present in the region, the Army, the paramilitary groups, and FARC guerrillas.⁴⁴⁹

These anecdotes symbolised the will of the peasants not only to break with the domination imposed upon them. They also illustrate their will to break with the fatalism that led them to a kind of half-passive, half-forced acceptance of the ideology, rules, and coercion imposed by the state, paramilitary groups, and the guerrillas on one hand, and with a feeling

⁴⁴⁸ Church#1, San José de Apartadó, 20 April 2014.

⁴⁴⁹ ATCC#2.

of powerlessness while facing extreme violence on the other. In the following sections, I analyse the process through which the members of peasant communities developed a critical consciousness in line with their needs. Following Gramsci's insights, I pay attention to the process through which the fragmented common sense of peasants evolved into a critical consciousness. I show how losing fear was instrumental to the development of this critical consciousness. It made possible the adoption of new principles and the mobilization of everyday practices towards the development of a new common sense that goes beyond subaltern groups' local settings and reach a universal, ethico-political stage aiming at protecting any life, as the introductory quote to this chapter illustrates. This critical consciousness was the product of the encounter between 'higher philosophies', such as Human Rights and International Law, and the popular and traditional values of peasants. It led to the development of a new peasant subject and identity fit for resistance and peacebuilding in the midst of armed conflict. While the birth of this critical consciousness is often identified with symbolic events constituted as landmarks by peasant communities' members themselves, I show how everyday practices and the working of memory contributed to the emergence and sustainability of this critical consciousness. Finally, I analyse the role of intellectuals, both organic and traditional, in cementing and cohering this critical consciousness.

Dealing with fear: breaking the 'ley del silencio'

In the context of oppressive and authoritarian regimes, Sharp pointed to the need to cast off fear as one of the prerequisite of non-violent struggle.⁴⁵⁰ He was not the first one in doing so, as Gandhi's writings also stress the importance of courage and bravery for the success non-violent actions. In order to act on their consciousness, participants in non-violent struggles have to lose fear and accept the violent consequences that may follow as a result of these struggles, for instance being tortured, harassed, imprisoned, or even killed. For Sharp, the necessity to cast off fear has political roots, insofar as power not only relies on coercion, but also on the cooperation and consent of subjects. Indeed, the sources of power identified by Sharp – i.e., authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions – ultimately depend on the obedience of the subjects of this power.

⁴⁵⁰ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*, p. 456.

Both the capacity to impose sanctions and the effectiveness of sanctions rest on cooperation, either voluntary or enforced.⁴⁵¹ The degree to which sanctions produce obedience heavily relies on the fear that these sanctions inspire, to such an extent that Sharp talks about the ‘paralysing political effect of fear’.⁴⁵² Therefore, it logically follows that the strategic choices available to activists, subjects, and resistance movements in order to resist against oppressive and authoritarian regimes ‘will be determined by the degree to which the participants have become fearless’. In fact, if members of non-violent movements fear for their lives, the movements collapse.⁴⁵³ Sharps sums up well the role of fear within non-violent struggles:

[...] It is the casting off of one’s fear – or at least the deliberate reduction and control of one’s fear – which makes possible the challenge, the persistence in face of repression, and the capacity to bring into operation the sources of strength and change which can finally lead to victory. This courage makes possible nonviolent discipline in face of severe repression and provocation; and this nonviolent discipline is in turn necessary for the operation of the technique. The nonviolence in nonviolent action rests upon courage.⁴⁵⁴

Sharp’s insight can complement Gramsci’s reflections on consciousness. In the context of an armed conflict, the relationship between consciousness-raising efforts and resistance changes in many ways. The experience of the peasant communities under study suggests that peasants were clearly aware of the problems they were facing but were prevented from confronting the armed actors for fear of retaliation. The process through which peasants lost fear was therefore key to the self-organisation of the community and the development of a concrete proposal of resistance. A close look at the dynamics of the emergence of peasant communities and the narratives of their members suggest that fear and the need for protection were amongst the primary motivations for creating, joining and adhering to the community’s principles and proposal. For peasant communities’ grassroots members, this decision usually did not find its roots in political or ideological preferences, or stances. One of the members of the CdPSJA explains as follows the reasons why she and her family decided to join the community:

We could not go out alone. Because all the area was dominated by paramilitaries only, by all these people. As soon as you went out alone, they would catch you, inquire about you, asking where is the other person, or where is... But how could you know? (...) They would catch you to interrogate you. If you did not justify yourself (...), take that, the head, they would beat you. You would then feel humiliated, and this is the reason why I decided to join the community, because I say that I could not work in Mulatos.(...) Another family arrived there and settled on the land in Mulatos. And what did they do? They had to come and join the community. They had to flee because they could not stand it either

⁴⁵¹ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*, pp. 10-16.

⁴⁵² Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*, p. 456.

⁴⁵³ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*, pp. 457-458.

⁴⁵⁴ Sharp, G. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part One*, p. 458.

there. Because every night they had to come and wake up in the mountain, because if these people caught some of them in the house, they would shoot you in the back of the neck. So, because of this, we came here.⁴⁵⁵

In the Carare region, in the case of the ATCC, a peasant recalls the time when the guerrillas directly warned him to keep his mouth shut.⁴⁵⁶ He had in fact just arrived to this region, and was looking for a piece of land to settle with his family: ‘When I arrived here to this harbour, this river, in the same boat as I came I had to come with a group of guerrilla members.’ He explained that he was travelling with his mum and brothers in order to find work, as it was still possible to find uncultivated land in this region. The guerrilla members then asked him if he knew someone who could recommend him. He did indeed. But fear accompanied his journey: ‘They did not threaten me, nothing of the sort, but they had me quite worried. Because the army had infiltrated the guerrilla (...) They were definitely in command.’ He then said that he told the guerrilla where he was going to settle. To which the guerrilla members answered, according to him: ‘Right, it is fine, it is fine. In the next few days we will pay you a visit [...] to explain you what the movement [the FARC] is.’ But the peasant knew well what this was about: ‘The only thing is, look... whoever opens his mouth is dead. They immediately told you. He [one of the guerrilla members] delicately said “whoever opens his mouth is dead. You have not seen anything.”’⁴⁵⁷ The law of silence was the unofficial rule through which the armed actors controlled the population. However, some individuals would also use the law of silence to settle existing personal conflicts. The opposition between armed actors was used to settle accounts within the population. For instance, to get rid of a neighbour, a person just had to tell the guerrilla that the neighbour was working as an informant of the Army.⁴⁵⁸ This was common practice in La India, as one member of the ATCC recalls.⁴⁵⁹ Once someone was accused of collaborating with one or the other armed actor, or of giving away too much information about one actor or the other, this was tantamount to a death sentence. It was almost impossible to plead innocence, although it seems that in the Carare region, in areas where the guerrilla was well established and knew the population well, an informal ‘right’ to be investigated was sometimes granted. But most of the time, killings and assassinations were indiscriminate, thus increasing the feeling of fear and uncertainty.

⁴⁵⁵ CdP#10, San José de Apartadó, 19 April 2014; See also CdP#7, San José de Apartadó, 13 April 2014.

⁴⁵⁶ ATCC#8, La India, 8 de May 2014.

⁴⁵⁷ ATCC#8.

⁴⁵⁸ ATCC#8.

⁴⁵⁹ ATCC#8.

The process through which the members of peasant communities in resistance lost fear and still dealt with fear explains why we witness a continuous exchange between strategies of overt resistance, and strategies of covert resistance. In the three cases under study, the latter were necessary in order to come up with the former. When peasants of the Carare region were faced with the ultimatum already mentioned, one of the difficulties they found related to the danger that represented the organisation of meetings and gatherings to decide what to do. One of the members that participated in these meetings explains the tactics they had to employ in order to escape the control of the armed actors:

These meetings were conceived in the following way. (...) it was not possible to gather four, five, or six, or a group of people (...) But the strategy was that, I had an idea so I told it to someone else, this someone else to another one, and then we would meet. So we would socialize what we were thinking, what we believed, thought and believed, regarding the strategy of how to face, let's put it like that, the situation we were going through with the [armed] actors.⁴⁶⁰

This founding member of the ATCC carried on explaining that guards were required in order to be able to carry out these meetings. These guards would:

...give the alert when they would see something strange. And if we would be meeting now in this house here, we would not meet again here. But we had to go somewhere else. And this is how ideas started to be raised [...], and the whole thing started to be organised, and organising how to deal with the situation became possible.⁴⁶¹

In addition to the presence of guards, other stratagems were employed to keep the meetings secret, such as the 'strategy of the stones on the roof'. At the very moment the guards would spot danger, they would throw a stone at the roof of the house where people were meeting: 'This was an alert. This meant, go away.'⁴⁶²

The process through which peasants lost their fear is not a linear relationship of cause and effect. It is not possible either to identify a precise moment when people lost fear, even though some peasants recall certain moments as pivotal:

The fear was dreadful. There was everybody by the bank of the river. Brother Simon was very important. Everybody by the bank of the river. And nobody would dare get in the rowboat. And he got in. 'let's go and come back alive'. And when they saw that he got in the rowboat, with such optimism, people followed him. This is why they could go and meet there, with the... with the... with the commandant (the local FARC commandant, alias Geronimo). So, you see, there was one individual who tomo la batuta, "let's go, let's go, we will definitely come back!" And many people were waiting the moment when they could see them come down the river, in the... in the water! Because without knowing... without knowing what would happen there, you see. So, this is how it happened. He was the one who took... 'let's go, let's go because God is with us, and we will go and we will come back'.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ ATCC#9, La India, 9 May 2014.

⁴⁶¹ ATCC#9.

⁴⁶² ATCC#9.

⁴⁶³ ATCC#2.

Rather, losing fear is a process that happened over a period of time and is still happening to some extent, insofar as the members of these communities still have to deal with fear. This process highlights a dialectical relationship between losing fear itself, and the actions whose purpose is to break the law of silence, such as speaking up against human rights violation or directly confronting the armed actors. This point is well illustrated by Jerez,⁴⁶⁴ a member of the ACVC and director of the Peasant Reserve Zone National Association (ANZORC):

Clearly, people were being deprived of their lands (...). And how did [paramilitary groups] do it? Well, using terror, murders, the quartering of bodies, all this was like... Now, when the ACVC was created, we had to denounce all this, because people were scared. We had to denounce, it was very important (...).⁴⁶⁵

But neither is the process of losing fear an even one. In this regard, it is also in a dialectical relationship with actions aiming at strengthening the collective strength of the community and cementing its cohesion, such as those actions aiming at restoring confidence between people. After describing the dead-end in which peasants of the Carare region found themselves in 1987, when 'there was nowhere to go', one of the early members of the ATCC explains:

We [the peasants] did not understand Josué,⁴⁶⁶ what he wanted to say, because I answered him many times, I mean, 'You can get yourself killed but I won't [...] Organise yourself, get yourself killed, but not me...' Because I thought that, directly, if one spoke, one would be killed. No!.⁴⁶⁷

Building trust and solidarity between people was important for them to lose their fear and make possible the sharing of fear between all. Fear gradually decreases as the collective construction of a community binds people together, breaking individual logics; a feeling of belonging to this very community starts emerging. This can be put down to solidarity, as a member of the ATCC explains:

(...) if you are about to die, you don't die alone but everybody dies, or nobody. And this eases the fear, between all of us... That is to say, you are going to jump into the river and you don't know how to swim, right. But someone tells you, 'jump, I will help you out if you are drowning.' And someone else says: 'jump!' And you see that there are so many people that it is not possible for you to drown. Yes or no? This, if you jump with someone, but if you are alone, what happens? Do you jump? No! If I jump I drown! So, this is important, the unity.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁴ Cesar Jerez can be considered as one of the main organic intellectuals of the peasant movement in Colombia. He joined the ACVC in 1998 and created its main news media, the news agency Prensa Rural (<http://prensarural.org/spip/>). He has also been representing the ACVC within the Peasant Reserve Zones National Association (Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reservas Campesinas – ANZORC), and is currently the national coordinator of the latter. He is the son of internally displaced peasants during the period called La Violencia, in the 1950s, and was born in the city. He studied geological engineering in the Soviet Union, and urban and regional development management in Bogotá.

⁴⁶⁵ ACVC#1, Bogotá, 7 April 2014.

⁴⁶⁶ Josué Vargas, one of the founding members of the ATCC and most prominent leader until he was killed in a paramilitary attack in Cimitarra in 1987.

⁴⁶⁷ ATCC#8.

⁴⁶⁸ ATCC#10, La India, 9 de May 2014.

But the need to deal with fear also led to the creation of a new cultural identity because of the collective dynamics of the organisational processes of peasant communities' initiatives. For instance, just a few days after the CdPSJA released its declaration on 23 March 1997, proclaiming its neutrality, the army conducted operations with the support of paramilitary groups which led to the forced displacement of hundreds of peasants. Most of them fled to urban centres, but about 800 decided to stay in the hamlet of San José.⁴⁶⁹ Occupying empty houses, fearing for their lives, suffering from a lack of food, no humanitarian assistance, and state neglect,⁴⁷⁰ peasants agreed to sign a pact of resistance.⁴⁷¹ They decided to stay, whatever the cost. Through meetings, discussions, and solidarity, peasants started to collectively organise in order to survive in the midst of the extreme violence they were facing, with the support of the Church, the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace (CIJP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The four months which followed saw the concretisation of the principles and norms set out in the March declaration. This period is when organic intellectuals were born and when the rules of the community were formulated. For Burnyeat, it is also during this period of time that what was originally conceived as a protection strategy in the midst of armed conflict became a 'political community'.⁴⁷² A feeling of being a community was born,⁴⁷³ and with it the working groups so important to the philosophy of the community. This feeling of belonging is still at the core of the community's critical consciousness today, as the words of one of the leaders of the community illustrates. He explains that the initiative of the CdPSJA is a form of 'solidarity-based resistance', whose most important task is to create a 'consciousness anchored in our heart' through efforts to collectively reflect on a daily basis on the path we are heading to'. He goes on to say that this 'has led them to (...) have a consciousness, and war taught us to live as a community, and it is very clear to us that this is what we want'.⁴⁷⁴ In my view, this feeling of belonging and organisational process enabled the community's members to collectively deal with fear, which strengthened the withdrawal of consent to the domination of armed actors. Indeed, the process of losing fear is intimately linked to the act of denying this consent to the armed actors' intimidation and to the refusal to obey to their will. A member

⁴⁶⁹ Church#1.

⁴⁷⁰ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 76.

⁴⁷¹ Church#1.

⁴⁷² Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 75.

⁴⁷³ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 77.

⁴⁷⁴ CdP#11.

of the CdPSJA explains why it was important to lose fear in order to speak up to the armed actors:

For instance, the guerrilla comes forward to tell you that, well, to ask you questions, or to ask you for favours above all, as a way of asking favours, well one has to say no, we don't take orders from any of the armed actors. Because, and tell them why, not to be afraid of telling them the truth. The same with the public armed forces. Not being afraid to tell them that we can't be with anyone of them because you all do us harm.⁴⁷⁵

This shows that the effectiveness of the law of silence is not only based on coercion or terror, but also on the consent, albeit passive, of the population. This dialectical dynamic between coercion and consent finds its manifestation in the cooperation of some individuals with the armed actors, be they guerrillas or paramilitary groups. In addition to fear, a certain lack of trust, individualism, and sometimes indifference led some individuals to see obedience to the armed actors' orders as the best way to survive in the midst of the conflict. This is especially clear in the case of the ATCC. A member of this association recalled how difficult, not to say impossible, it was to organise public meetings before the creation of the organisation. He also mentioned that they 'did not trust [in each other] because then some used to work for paramilitary groups, others for the guerrilla [...] this is what we used to experience'.⁴⁷⁶ The fact that the domination of illegal armed groups was also grounded, to some extent, in the consent of the population is well expressed by another member of the ATCC who provides a very clear illustration of the dialectical relationship between losing fear and the development of a critical consciousness. He explains that in 1988, a year after the creation of the ATCC, 'the most terrific aspects [of the conflict] faded, such as the law of silence, the indifference, (...) the non-brotherhood'. According to him, this feeling of indifference meant that there was 'no consciousness of some sort about saying that the neighbour was my brother as well'. On the contrary, for him 'this indifference made possible the fact that in a particular region, the majority of the population, everybody would act and feel alone... and would do what seemed best for his own person.' As in the case of the CdPSJA, losing fear was then intimately linked to the development of a new critical consciousness that would strengthen the social cohesion of the population and encourage people to 'engage with each other again.' As my interviewee explained, 'This region was colonised by many, many people in provenance of different parts of the country. So the first challenge was how to put

⁴⁷⁵ CdP#1.

⁴⁷⁶ ATCC#1, La India, 6 May 2014: 8.

an end to this indifference, and the other was how to foster reconciliation.’ Losing fear and the strengthening of social cohesion and relationships then represented the first steps to the development of principles, strategies, and agreements in order to resist in the midst of armed conflict. He went on to say that ‘from then on’, it was really about:

developing a common criteria and define a few rules. And these rules were considered as cohabitation pacts, and these pacts were agreed between the civil population in its entirety, between peasants, this gave ground for the definition of mutual respect pacts between the actors, for the engagement in dialogue, but these dialogues had to be well defined and had to have a... a... say, a process of how these dialogues were going to be. Transparency, open dialogues, and, dialogues of mutual understanding, for instance (inaudible), dialogues where, where, where the primary condition was being able to understand and being in a position to listen to each other. So, these leaders came up with a well-crafted strategy about how the dialogues would be, how would reconciliation work, how would forgiveness work, also because it was... it was... say, this very reconciliation was also an exercise of forgiveness with the very [armed] actors, because let’s say that in the progress of the dialogues, who was actually talking to the [armed] actors? It was the widows and widowers, the orphans, eh... anybody who was a victim of (Inaudible) were those who sat down to talk with their aggressors. And to say ok, we can do an act of forgiveness. We have allied but we are going to respect our ways of thinking. And this meant that eh... that this forgiveness was being able to show an example to the new generation that the facts that occurred in the past would not be repeated, to the sons of our sons, right? How to start building a space where dialogue was the driving force for understanding all these differences and for searching ways out eh... eh... like how to live together, to search for ways out that would allow us to stay on our land.⁴⁷⁷

In this quotation, all the elements which enabled the development of a critical consciousness are present. The identification of strategies to counter the actions of armed actors and withdraw consent, the development of principles and norms, the role of memory, and the role of organic intellectuals are all key stages of the development of a new critical consciousness. What the authors of *El orden desarmado* argue regarding the ATCC can be applied to the CdPSJA and the ACVC:

During the emergence [of the association] a process of identity creation occurred in which the community distinguished itself from armed actors, acquired a feeling of belonging as a group and claim the right to decide, as community, how to organise itself and [choose] the path that the collective life project should take.⁴⁷⁸

It is these elements and processes that I analyse in more details in the following sections.

Withdrawing consent: Non-violence, neutrality and human rights

Few studies have paid attention to the capacity of civilians to oppose resistance to armed actors. Kaplan argues that the success of this withdrawal of consent usually relies on the existence of social interactions between armed groups and civilians other than through violence, and the existence of a collective organisation supporting civilians’ demands.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ ATCC#3.

⁴⁷⁸ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 359.

⁴⁷⁹ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians', p. 13.

Building on the previous section, I push this argument further to show that the institutional element, i.e., the mere existence of an institution, is not enough to explain the logic and dynamics of the process of withdrawing consent. Losing fear and the design of a political proposal in line with peasants' consciousness of their own dignity, autonomy, and rights, were both instrumental to withdraw consent in an effective way. In this regard, the choice for non-violence, the adoption of a neutral position, and the use of a human rights discourse symbolise the emergence of a critical consciousness which aims to break with the logic and dynamics of armed conflict by withdrawing consent to the armed actors' domination. These principles eventually reached peasant communities through external actors, such as the Church, national human rights organisations, and international NGOs. However, this new critical consciousness also builds on more traditional peasant values, such as dignity, autonomy and labour, as well as on the everyday experience of peasants.

The success of withdrawing consent is intimately linked to the existence of a proposal that puts together the logic and principles of such an initiative. One of the leaders of the ACVC explains:

If there is no organisation, if there is no proposal, well, the relationship between peasants and guerrillas is likely to be characterised by subordination, that is to say, the peasants would be subordinated to the presence of strong guerrilla, with a lot of economic power, with military power and with political power, because they are... they... are within the territories, and they exert a certain political power, of control, of... the... that is to say, they are like a state within the state with whom you have to talk, reach agreements, agree, or disagree, yes.⁴⁸⁰

It is not enough to say 'no' or to deny in discourse only the domination of armed actors. As I have shown, losing fear represents a first step towards a break with a kind of passive acceptance of their own domination. The creation of a discourse justifying their position, backed by the creation of an institution, was the second step towards withdrawing consent. Considered as a political proposal, the institutions created by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC take a concrete expression in the form of an organisation, association, or community. While the logic behind withdrawing consent is similar in all three cases, the concrete modalities of this process differed quite sensibly. The ATCC engaged in dialogue with both legal and illegal armed actors while the CdPSJA and the ACVC decided to break all relationships with illegal armed actors. The ATCC reached agreements with illegal armed actors and the army while the decision of the CdPSJA and the ACVC was unilateral and was

⁴⁸⁰ ACVC#1.

not negotiated with any of the armed actors. For the CdPSJA's members, this meant a cultural change, as Burnyeat shows,⁴⁸¹ something which I explore further in Chapter 3. The context in which these communities were first created was also different. The ATCC was born in 1987, at a time when the international human rights cooperation did not have the influence it would have a decade later, when the ACVC and the CdPSJA were created. Finally, the historical context and political culture of the three regions where these communities are located is also to be taken into account in order to understand the differences characterising their critical consciousness. This historical context and the political struggles form the ideological terrain onto which this critical consciousness emerged.

All three communities decided to adopt non-violence as a core principle of their struggles. But while in the case of the CdPSJA and the ACVC the possibility of armed resistance was never considered, the founding members of the ATCC did reflect on the relevance of such a violent alternative. This shows that the adaptation of non-violence in the case of the ATCC was a combination of pragmatism and moral considerations.⁴⁸² In fact, Josué Vargas, the first president and an outstanding leader of the early years of the ATCC first advocated the necessity to take arms.⁴⁸³ According to the authors of 'El orden desarmado', the voices advocating for the violent option were discarded by a combination of pragmatic considerations and the influence of the Adventist Church.⁴⁸⁴ The awareness that the violent option would just end up fuelling the conflict without bringing about any kind of progressive change seems to have played a role in pushing the decision in favour of non-violence.⁴⁸⁵ This is true for all three communities. But for the ATCC, making such a decision in the 1980s was not easy. Indeed, during its early phase, the ATCC could not benefit from the institutional support of national and international NGOs or international organisations for its protection.

As for the withdrawal of consent and the adoption of non-violence, the neutrality principle operated in practice according to different modalities in each case. However, in the three cases of the CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC, its aim was to distinguish civilians from armed combatants in order to guarantee the protection of the former. Article 2 of the declaration released by the CdPSJA on the day of its creation defines the community as 'part

⁴⁸¹ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 61.

⁴⁸² Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 320.

⁴⁸³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 321.

⁴⁸⁴ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 322.

⁴⁸⁵ ATCC#12, La India, 10 May 2014.

of peasant and civilian population, non-combatant and which, in spite of the conduct of hostilities, will be protected no matter how rigorous confrontations are'.⁴⁸⁶ In addition, in Article 3, the declaration imposed rules on the community's members.⁴⁸⁷ They must not take part in the armed confrontation, be it directly or indirectly, and must fulfil the following conditions. The first is 'to refrain from carrying and/or have arms or explosive material'. The second is 'to refrain from providing any logistical support to one side or the other of the conflict'. And the third is 'to refrain from resorting to the armed actors in order to solve internal, personal, or family-related problems'. For the members of the CdPSJA, this represented a change in practices and habits regarding their relationship with armed actors, in particular with the guerrillas, with whom they had a political and historical relationship.⁴⁸⁸ They had to stop selling food or providing water, not only to FARC combatants but to the army as well. In other words, it represented a break with the fragmented common-sense-dictating behaviour which was imposed on them by armed actors, even if saying 'no' meant having to face retaliation. This was the only way civilians could survive in the midst of armed conflict and put an end to the endless humiliations⁴⁸⁹ and accusations of belonging to one or the other side. In all three cases, the idea of neutrality was a product of different scales, actors, and influences. Finally, to some extent, the adoption of a human rights discourse symbolises the transition from an economic-corporate struggle to a struggle for hegemony. The use of such a discourse makes a start at locating peasant struggles within a more universal framework. It also represents a first step towards the articulation of the significance of these struggles for peacebuilding in Colombia. I elaborate on this last point in Chapter 5 in relation to the making of alternative historical blocs.

In parallel to these rules and principles, peasant communities have developed a critical consciousness that combines these principles with more traditional peasant values, such as dignity, autonomy, and solidarity. Both these principles and traditional values are being reflected within their everyday practices. The everyday then becomes the site where this critical consciousness is being sustained and maintained. It is through their everyday practices that peasant communities managed to break with the dynamics of the armed conflicts and

⁴⁸⁶ CdPSJA, 'Declaración relativa a la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó' (San José de Apartadó, CdPSJA, 23 March 1997).

⁴⁸⁷ CdPSJA, 'Declaración'

⁴⁸⁸ Church#1.

⁴⁸⁹ CdP#10.

change their position or representation within this conflict.⁴⁹⁰ For the members of the CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC, being neutral meant changing their everyday practices in order to stop being involved in the armed conflict. It not only involved changing their behaviour towards armed actors, but also how they related to each other. In this regard, one of the leaders of the CdPSJA explained that their initiative is 'an organisational response building on a daily basis'.⁴⁹¹ He went on to say that these principles and values have to be sustained day after day as 'he who does not build on a daily basis gets lost within the struggle. Everything ends the day he stops fighting.' As a community, their action is then collective, such as the working groups or the collective labour, 'because within a situation such as the one we are going through, it is not possible to resist on your own'.⁴⁹² Another member of the CdPSJA added that the identification to these principles are 'a fundamental basis' for the community, 'as [they] are autonomous and [they] are different to many other organisations that, one way or another, have always opted for individualism, egoism, and for [receiving] state benefits'. These principles are then 'very useful to identify ourselves as a true peace community'.⁴⁹³ The everyday life of the CdPSJA shows that those special and symbolic moments, which were constituted as landmarks in the building of resistance, are not the only elements playing a role in sustaining the collective and individual consciousness of peasant communities' members. This new critical consciousness is also sustained through everyday practices, such as cultivating the land, participating in the working groups once a week, or going to school. These three moments, awareness-raising efforts, memory building, and everyday practices are entangled within the experience of peace community members. This is quite clear in the words of the legal representative of the CdPSJA at the time of my fieldwork. He said that everyday life within the community is a 'truly and incredibly deep experience' and 'a labour full of teachings'. He added:

The everyday means building consciousness with every passing day, and a reflection regarding the fact that this [the community's resistance] is very important, that there is no other way out than this one, the search for peace. So I think that the everyday has enabled us to... enabled us to maintain ourselves, with every passing day we think and analyse and that, and that we can reflect on the importance of the community, which is truly where in spite of so many deaths, so much horror we have been through in this region, I think that this has turned into hope, I don't think we have realised that all these aggressions and deaths, well, they could have led us to stop the struggle because of... No! I think that we have suffered so much pain that the pain has turned into hope and we think that this is the way we fight,

⁴⁹⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 476.

⁴⁹¹ CdP#9.

⁴⁹² CdP#9.

⁴⁹³ CdP#7.

when the pain has turned into hope, I think that we can carry on for days on end and we can be assured that we are doing it.⁴⁹⁴

While this collective dimension is present in the charter of the ATCC in that members of the association have to ‘associate in order to guarantee the right to life and work’,⁴⁹⁵ its charter seems to indicate that it conceives of itself as an association of individuals rather than aiming to form a collective unity. Article 2.e states that ‘the Association and its members considered as individuals, do not involve themselves in any way with armed actors, and stay foreign and impartial to subversive and paramilitary groups [operating] in the region’.⁴⁹⁶ The charter also reflects another dividing line between the critical consciousness developed by the ATCC and the CdPSJA. While the latter, since its inception, has been critical of the state and will eventually ‘break’ with the state, the former affirms in its charter the need to ‘cooperate with state organisms in the social and economic rehabilitation processes in the area’. It also recognises the ‘legitimately constituted authority of the national army’, calling to respect its sovereignty.⁴⁹⁷ Finally, even if the ACVC is also formally an association and has not formulated a narrative of organic unity as the CdPSJA has, the collective dimension of its initiative is much more important than in the case of the ATCC. This is particularly visible in the production dimension of its economic practices, in the way it engages in politics, and in its relationship to the territory. These differences can be explained historically and contextually. The ATCC has suffered much more from FARC violence and coercion, while in the case of the CdPSJA and the ACVC, the relationship was more consensual, even though it cannot be characterised as collaboration. Similarly, the influence of the Communist party and other leftist movements has always been stronger in the regions where the CdPSJA and the ACVC are located, whereas in the Carare region, the traditional Conservative and Liberal political parties have remained dominant. Finally, the CdPSJA and the ACVC have also been exposed to the influence of the international human rights movement, which has developed a highly critical vision of the state. All these elements help explain why some traces of the old fragmented common sense remain in the narrative of the ATCC, but not in the case of the CdPSJA and the ACV.

⁴⁹⁴ CdP#11.

⁴⁹⁵ ATCC, ‘Lineas bases para ser socios de la ATCC’, Article 2.a (La India, ATCC, sin fecha)

⁴⁹⁶ ATCC, ‘Lineas bases’, Article 2.e

⁴⁹⁷ ATCC, ‘Lineas bases’, Article 2.b and 2.e.

This critical consciousness can be found clearly articulated by the mouths of leaders and supporters of the three peasant communities under study. However, as I came to understand during my fieldwork, while grassroots members of the communities all agree with these principles, their understandings of these principles usually focus on their concrete application.⁴⁹⁸ In other words, they will not always be able to explain in detail the reasons behind these principles, but they know perfectly how they are to be put in practice. This discrepancy between leaders and grassroots members points towards the importance of organic and traditional intellectuals in the development of peasant communities' initiatives. It is to their role that I now turn to.

Leaders and organic intellectuals

The best known of Gramsci's characterisation of intellectuals is his distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals. Within the category of traditional intellectuals, I include those traditional intellectuals who support peasant communities from within international organisations, NGOs, and even embassies. Their role can be reduced to two functions. First, they not only help peasant communities in organising the resistance, but also in processing legal cases against the state and paramilitary groups in order to get some kind of justice and discover the truth in relation to the several massacres, disappearances, and displacements they have suffered. Lawyers belonging to Colombian NGOs have had prominent roles in this regard, as have members of national NGOs. Second, those traditional intellectuals who contribute to the protection of peasant communities and have a political role in connecting the local struggle of peasant communities with broader issues related to peacebuilding and the state in Colombia. International NGO workers, embassy and United Nations officials, but also Colombian intellectuals are included in this category. I analyse their role in more detail in the next chapter, which deals with the protection strategies used by peasant communities to protect both their territory and members.

I also consider as traditional intellectuals people who have contributed to the creation and maintenance of the peasant communities under study without being organically tied to peasant communities. Burnyeat has shown the role played by the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace (CIJP) in the creation of the CdPSJA and the few years that

⁴⁹⁸ see for instance CdP#10.

followed.⁴⁹⁹ Motivated by socialist ideas and influenced by the liberation theology, this organisation has connected the community's struggle with national and international organisations and movements. It is through the CIJP that the CdPSJA managed to receive the support of Peace Brigades International, an international NGO that ensures protective accompaniment for human rights defenders. The CIJP has also contributed to the development of the CdPSJA's critical consciousness, in particular regarding the adoption of a human rights discourse and the neutrality principle. The CIJP's own representation of the community describes it as a practice in resistance and a humanising process against the negative impact of capitalism.⁵⁰⁰ The CIJP's ideas have not only clearly left their mark on the CdPSJA's narrative, but also on their concrete decisions. The decision to break all relationship with the state echoes the institutional mistrust in the state, portrayed as a terrorist state, that the CIJP shared with the community. In addition, in the three regions under investigation, the influence of the Church was instrumental in the struggle of peasants to survive and resist in the midst of the armed conflict, as I have already mentioned in relation to the adoption of non-violence. As for the former, the idea of a non-violent and neutral community was suggested by the Archbishop of Apartadó before being appropriated by peasants of the Serranía de Abibe. The CdPSJA was also accompanied by the CIJP during the first few years after its creation. Father Giraldo, who was a member of the CIJP, still accompanies the community and can now be considered as one of its main leaders. In the case of the ACVC, the Diocese of Barrancabermeja was an important support ever since the *exodo campesino* in 1998 and still supports the ACVC's initiatives today. In this regard, the Archbishop of Barrancabermeja, Monsignor Castellón, intervened during the introduction of the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-descendent and Indigenous Communities for the Land and Peace of Colombia, organised by the ACVC in August 2011. In addition, another churchman, Father Francisco de Roux, also supported the ACVC in the development of economic projects and joined the ACVC in dialogue with illegal armed actors when he was director of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Program. Some of them had the role of intermediaries between the armed actors and the communities, or between the state and peasants. The Archbishop of Apartadó, for instance, first gave the idea of forming a neutral community to the peasants of San José de Apartadó, and took the final proposal to the armed actors. In the

⁴⁹⁹ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, pp. 65-75.

⁵⁰⁰ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 72.

case of the ATCC and the CdPSJA, the distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals blurs when it comes to the role of priests in the creation and cohesion of the association. Indeed, some of them had and have been living in the area for a long time. As founding members of the ATCC, they participated in the discussions after the ultimatum received by the population in 1987, and led the dialogue with the armed actors afterward. They had a direct influence on the adoption of non-violence principles. They also contributed to the cohesion and internal strength of the community through their more direct role as priests, i.e., in the organisation of masses and religious ceremonies. In addition, as for the CDPSJA, a priest came to be organically linked to the community's struggle. While Father Javier Giraldo first started to accompany the CdPSJA as a member of the CIJP, he eventually became part of the Internal Council of the Community and still assumes a key political, social, legal, and religious role within the community.

Alongside those traditional intellectuals, all three peasant communities have developed what Gramsci calls 'organic intellectuals'. All the members of the three peasant communities under study affirm that a few individuals played an instrumental role in the process that led to the creation of these peasant communities and in the success of their struggle. These 'organic intellectuals' can be categorised under two different categories. On one hand are those who emerged directly from the peasant communities. They were born during the very organisational processes that would lead to the creation of the CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC. On the other are those who joined their struggle and came to be organically linked to the resistance of these communities. In both cases, organic intellectuals played a key role in strengthening the three processes that have been highlighted, losing fear, withdrawing consent, and adopting non-violent principles. Intellectuals had both a social and a political function. They contributed to the strengthening of the internal cohesion of each community through awareness-raising and memory-building efforts, pushed the creation of institutions that would eventually support the political proposal of the communities, and influenced the ideas that would accompany the resistance of these communities. In other words, they contributed to the emergence of a new peasant critical consciousness and were key to the organisational process of the communities' initiatives. In addition to these functions, they have developed more elaborated versions of the critical consciousness analysed above. Jesús Emilio, one of the most prominent leaders of the CdPSJA, is the most representative example of these organic intellectuals who have developed a critical

consciousness, both through their contact with international actors and their experience as peasant farmers. For him, resisting is ‘the voluntary decision of a person who does not agree with injustices’⁵⁰¹. He says that the economic, political and social system according to which the world is organised is profoundly unjust: ‘In the end the system is a millenary dictatorship (...). Wherever you look, there is this dictatorship of power. Kings, empires, capitalism... (...). This has always been like this and will go on like this forever.’⁵⁰² He divides the world in two parts. One refers to an unfair way of thinking, and the other is a way of thinking akin to resistance. No matter how big or widespread injustices are, they cannot eradicate the latter way of thinking. However, he goes on to say that ‘it is not because we think differently that we will change the world.’⁵⁰³ In fact, the vast majority of humanity takes part in these injustices, compete within the system and enjoy the system. This way of life or system is nowadays being sold as ‘development’, and human beings strive for this way of life. As a result, humanity ‘will go from bad to worse’ and injustices will increase together with violence. This is the result of the economic system, within which ‘humanity does not fit’, and which is ‘against humanity for money’.⁵⁰⁴ I portray other organic intellectuals and analyse their specific roles and functions in more detail throughout the following chapters in relation to peasant communities’ strategies of war of position and the making of new historical blocs. For now, it is enough to say that they are in my view key to making the link between what Gramsci refers to as ‘two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness)’, one that reflects a man’s practice, and another one that is ‘superficially explicit or verbal’.⁵⁰⁵ They help resolve within the consciousness of each individual member of peasant communities this discrepancy between theory and practice through overcoming fear and elaborating principles which allow them to survive in the midst of armed conflict. At the collective level, they contribute to the ‘unity between ‘spontaneity’ – those traditional peasant values and stories of oppression and violence – on one hand, and ‘conscious leadership’ – symbolised by the principles and norms designed within each community – on the other, which ‘is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes’.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰¹ CdPSJA#9.

⁵⁰² CdPSJA#9.

⁵⁰³ CdPSJA#9.

⁵⁰⁴ CdPSJA#9.

⁵⁰⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 360.

⁵⁰⁶ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 198-199.

Conclusion

I have shown that the emergence of a critical consciousness was key to the creation and current existence of the CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC. A rise in their consciousness allowed them to overcome the fatalism and determinism that, together with coercion, is at the origin of their passivity.⁵⁰⁷ It gave rise to a new conception of the world that peasants applied to their external world in order to change it. An analysis of the process through which peasants lost fear and the social dynamics accompanying it helps explain how peasants managed to overcome the fragmented common sense imposed on them by armed actors and political society alike. This critical consciousness allowed peasant communities to break with this common sense, and place politics at the centre of their relationships with armed actors and the state. But it also represents a break with more traditional political adhesion by leading to new political forms, practices, and alliances that are asymmetrical to the ruling elites' political practices. In all three cases, what began as a protection need would soon evolve into peace initiatives going beyond peasants' corporate interests. The success of the CdPSJA and the ACVC in sustaining their initiatives and the decay of the ATCC can be explained by referring to how this critical consciousness has evolved and has been sustained over time. In addition, the fact that there remained some elements of the old fragmented common sense in the principles and norms designed by the ATCC – in particular in relation to the state – helps explain why the former could not maintain the autonomy of its early years. It ended up partly co-opted by the state and other external actors. That said, all three communities contributed to the emergence of a new peasant subject fit for resistance in the midst of armed conflict. By stressing notions of autonomy, dignity, and neutrality backed by a human rights discourse, I have argued that the peasant initiatives under study represent a break from both traditional political ideologies and previous peasant-led attempts in Colombia to challenge the power structures that are at the root of their alienation. This new critical consciousness and the political culture that comes with it have already had a huge impact at local level and represent a huge asset for an eventual post-conflict setting. I discuss this potential for peacebuilding in relation to the peace agreement reached by the state and the FARC in Chapter 5. But before doing that, I carry on the analysis of the CdPSJA, the ATCC, and the ACVC in relation to how they can challenge the power that is at the source of their alienation. I take a close look into

⁵⁰⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 336-337.

how they establish some kind of control over their territory (Chapter 3) and make new historical blocs (Chapter 4).

Chapter 4: 'Making' the Territory: the spatial politics of peasant communities

Introduction

Anecdotes

The banner located at the entrance of the CdPSJA contains a warning to any visitor. The territory of the community is private property and access is not permitted without due authorisation. In any other context, this warning would leave passers-by with the feeling that behind this gate lives an unsympathetic, conservative neighbour, keen to enforce their individual right to private property and ensure that nobody trespasses. But behind this gate lives a community which has been resisting armed conflict for the past 18 years. In fact, this warning is mostly aimed at the Colombian armed forces and the illegal armed groups operating in the region. Still, it is hard to understand how such a banner can successfully protect the community, and I wonder what the point of such a seemingly powerless warning in front of brute force and violence is. The banner next to the warning presents us with a similar puzzle. It lists all the principles attached to the territory of the community. It states that members of the community commit to not carry arms; to not drink alcohol; to fight for justice and against impunity; to not receive any money as part of the individual compensation of victims; to not to sow illegal crops; to not manipulate or hand over information to any of the armed actors; to not participate in the armed conflict, either directly or indirectly. Still, we are left with a puzzle. How can these principles possibly contribute to the protection of a territory and its people?

This chapter is about the strategies employed by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC to protect and 'make' this territory. Space plays an important role in the resistance by these communities, to such an extent that it is possible to make a case for conceiving the peasant communities' initiatives as territorial, or spatial, projects. Peasant communities need a territory to be able to challenge the power of armed actors, the state, and multinational companies. This territory is filled with principles and ideologies. These visible principles provide a specific representation of these territories and civilians as neutral actors in the midst of the armed conflict. Analyses of peasant communities' resistance are too often normative and present these principles as the key factor in the success of civil resistance led by peasant communities. However, behind these ideologies associated with a territory, lie

material relations which contribute to the making of this very same territory. These material relations are inscribed within places, networks, and scales. In this chapter, I analyse the complex strategical interactions between places, networks, and scales that converge towards a given territory to both ensure its protection and create counter-hegemonic spaces for peace. That allows me to provide an explanation of peasant communities' strategies that not only puts the emphasis on norms and on the consent aspect of peasant communities' power, but also on the territorial character of these strategies and the material aspect of their power.

This chapter represents an effort to understand how peasant communities 'make' spaces on which their consciousness, or conception of the world, can be enacted and put into practice to establish more peaceful social relations. Indeed, to understand the contribution to peacebuilding by the three peasant communities of the CdPSJA, ACVC, and ATCC, I argue that it is not enough to rely on a normative, descriptive, and historical account of these initiatives. The spatial dimension is key to accounting for the success of peasant communities in protecting their territory, claiming their rights, and growing as a community. By integrating a spatial dimension to the Gramscian framework of analysis used so far, I further use Gramsci's understanding of power as both coercion and consent in order to explain the outcome of peasant communities' non-violent strategies. I look at the role played by space in counter-hegemonic and anti-passive revolution struggles against both structural and conjunctural violence. By making a case for considering the political institutions created by peasant communities as spatial institutions, I link the social relations and political struggles analysed in the previous chapter to the production of space, and analyse how space in return contributes to shaping social relations. This provides a 'spatialised' perspective of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and war of position on one hand, and of the counter-hegemonic struggle of peasant communities on the other.

My argument is straightforward. I claim that the ability of peasant communities to assert their control over a specific territory is crucial for their autonomy and capacity to build peace. Phrased in a Gramscian terminology, this first means that the autonomy of peasant communities is determined by the degree to which they manage to establish an 'organic' connection with the spaces they inhabit. Peasant communities have to ensure the cohesion between the ideological, political, and economic elements of their struggle, and the territory serves as unifying ground for that purpose. Second, to control the place peasant communities' members occupy within society, they therefore have to control the territory in

which their communities are located. Space is intimately linked to the formation of peasants' political subjectivities and is at the heart of their counter-hegemonic struggle. In this regard, the spaces symbolised by peasant communities are 'not merely physical location but ideological location as identity'.⁵⁰⁸ The political subjectivity of peasant communities' members, in other words their place or ideological location within society, is dialectically related to the control they have over their territory, over the space occupied by their communities. Both are conditioned and obtained through the spatial strategies which are the subject of this chapter. Third, the peasant communities' ability to produce autonomous spaces that break with the capitalist mode of production is a necessary pre-condition of their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding and the post-conflict setting in relation to challenges at the regional and national scales. Peasant communities, based on a very specific representation of the territory, promote a political economy that does not contribute to violence; does not fuel the armed conflict; provides concrete and viable solutions to problems faced by peasants; and forms the basis of peaceful social relations in line with the cultural, economic, and social needs of the population.

To support this argument, I pay attention to the spatial politics of peasant communities. By 'spatial politics', I mean the range of practices, strategies, and tactics used by peasant communities to stay on or return to their land, protect their territory, build counter-hegemonic networks, and produce counter-alternative spaces. I deploy Gramsci's concept of war of position and I draw on Jessop *et al.*'s theorisation of socio-spatial relations.⁵⁰⁹ I use the concepts of territory, place, scale, and network (TPSN) to show how peasant communities tried – and managed to different extents and degrees – to assert their control over a particular geographical space. I first introduce what Soja has termed the 'socio-spatial dialectic'⁵¹⁰ (Soja, 1989: 76) and the TPSN framework of analysis. Then I discuss this framework in relation to Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and war of position. These first two short sections provide a conceptual framework to engage with the relationship between social relations and spatial relations within peasant communities and develop the next section in order to analyse peasant communities' strategies. The rest of this chapter analyses these

⁵⁰⁸ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 174.

⁵⁰⁹ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26:3 (2008) pp. 389–401.

⁵¹⁰ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London, Verso, 1989).

strategies, which were developed by peasant communities in order to assert a control over the territory they inhabit.

The socio-spatial dialectic

It is necessary to distinguish between space as nature, the environmental and contextual space in which human beings relate to each other on one hand, and space as a social product, 'the created space of social organization and production' on the other.⁵¹¹ In this chapter, I draw on Soja's definition of the latter. Soja argues that 'the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience. Socially produced space is a created structure comparable to other social constructions resulting from the transformation of given conditions inherent to being alive, in much the same way that human history represents a social transformation of time'.⁵¹² Understood as such, space as an object of study has made its appearance within several fields of study. In an attempt to map this spatial turn, I identified the literature on geography and resistance;⁵¹³ on the relationships between state and space;⁵¹⁴ on social movements and contentious politics;⁵¹⁵ on territory, power and conflict in Colombia;⁵¹⁶ on Globalization;⁵¹⁷ and on the International Political Economy.⁵¹⁸ Within this literature, the concepts of place, scale, network, and territory appear

⁵¹¹ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 79.

⁵¹² Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 79-80.

⁵¹³ Featherstone, D. *Resistance, Space and Political Identities* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Pile, S. and Keith, M. (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance* (London, Routledge, 1997); Sharp, J. et al. (eds.) *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance: Geographies of Domination and Resistance* (London, Routledge, 1999);

⁵¹⁴ Brenner, N. et al. (eds.). *State/Space: A Reader*, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2003).

⁵¹⁵ Featherstone, D. 'Spatialities of transnational resistance to globalization: The maps of grievance of the Inter-Continental Caravan', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28:4 (2003) pp. 404–421; Leitner, H.; Peck, J. and Sheppard, E.S. (eds) *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* (New York, Guilford Press, 2007); Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities of contentious politics'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33:2 (2008) pp. 157–172; Oslender, U. 'Fleshing out the geographies of social movements: Colombia's Pacific coast black communities and the "aquatic space,"' *Political Geography*, 23:8 (2004) pp. 957–985; Routledge, P. 'Convergence space: process geographies of grassroots globalization networks', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, 28 (2010) pp. 333-349; Sewell, W.H.J. 'Space in Contentious Politics', In *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, edited by Aminzade, R.R. et al. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 51–88.

⁵¹⁶ García de la Torre, C.I. and Aramburo Siegert, C.I. (eds.), *Geografías de la guerra.*; González, F.E. *Poder.*; González, F.E.; Lemus, O.; Matiz, C.N.; González, A.F.A. and Cuadros, J.D.R. *Conflicto y territorio.*; Restrepo, J.A. et al., (eds.) *Una vieja guerra en un nuevo contexto: conflicto y territorio en el sur de Colombia* (Bogotá, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Cinep, Cerac, Odecofi, Colciencias, 2011).

⁵¹⁷ Brenner, N. 'Beyond state-centrism? Space, territoriality, and geographical scale in globalization studies', *Theory and Society*, 28:1 (1999) pp. 39–78; Swyngedouw, E. 'Globalisation or "glocalisation"? Networks, territories and rescaling', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17:1 (2004) pp. 25–48.

⁵¹⁸ Bieler, A. and Morton, A.D. 'Globalisation, the State and Class Struggle: A "Critical Economy" Engagement with Open Marxism', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5:4, (2003) pp. 467–99; Hesketh, C. 'From passive revolution'; Hesketh, C. 'The Clash of Spatializations'; Hesketh, C. 'Producing State Space in Chiapas: Passive Revolution and Everyday Life', *Critical Sociology*, 42:2 (2014) pp. 1–18; Hesketh, C. and Morton, A.D. 'Spaces of Uneven Development'; Morton, A.D..

to be central to any geographical and spatial analysis of social phenomena. These fields of study have built on the reassertion of space within critical social science and the 'socio-spatial dialectic' in order to address issues of concern to this thesis, such as resistance, conflict, social movements, state formation, and neoliberalism. The need to emphasise the multiple dimensions of space, and to question the privileging of any spatiality of a given social phenomenon, is considered crucial for any complete analysis of said phenomena. A consensus seems indeed to have emerged in that space is constituted through social relations but also shapes the latter. Spatial and social relations stand in a dialectical relation to each other.

Soja's socio-spatial dialectic

Soja has shown how social science in general and Marxism in particular have been aspatial, even in their critical strands (Soja, 1989).⁵¹⁹ A 'historical imagination' has characterised modern social theory and subordinated space to time.⁵²⁰ Space was not only subordinated within critical social theory, but the instrumentality of space was ignored as well. The way capitalism contributed to shape and produce space, and to adapt the spatial organisation of society to its needs was hidden from view. Similarly, the fact that the state was a 'socially produced space actively engaged in the reproduction of a particular social spatialization' remained unproblematised.⁵²¹ Soja traces the origins of post-modern geographies, in other words, geographies which take into account the spatial dimension, to three authors: Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and John Berger. He argues that the latter two have contributed to a restructuring of critical social thought and enabled us to 'see more clearly the long-hidden instrumentality of human geographies, in particular the encompassing and encaging spatializations of social life that have been associated with the historical development of capitalism'.⁵²² But the reassertion of space within critical social thought would not happen until the 1970s when a Marxist geography began to emerge and emphasise the significance

'Reflections on Uneven Development: Mexican Revolution, Primitive Accumulation, Passive Revolution', *Latin American Perspectives*, 37:1 (2010) pp. 7–34.

⁵¹⁹ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*.

⁵²⁰ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 10.

⁵²¹ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 34-35.

⁵²² Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 24.

of spatiality.⁵²³ A 'socio-spatial dialectic' was born, in which the question of the autonomy of spatial processes in relation to social relations of production predominated⁵²⁴.

Soja argues for a simultaneity of social and spatial relations of productions. He claims:

The structure of organized space is not a separate structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation, nor is it simply an expression of the class structure emerging from social (and thus aspatial?) relations of production. It represents, instead, a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production, relations which are simultaneously social and spatial.⁵²⁵

For Soja, this simultaneity relies on the existence of a 'space-to-class homology', 'a corresponding spatial homology to traditionally defined class relations and hence to the contingencies of class conflict and structural transformation'. Soja assumes that 'the two sets of structured relations (the social and the spatial) are not only homologous, in that they arise from the same origins in the mode of production, but are also dialectically inseparable.⁵²⁶ This is the socio-spatial dialectic.

Such an emphasis on this socio-spatial dialectic draws attention to processes of differentiation rather than homogenisation. In Colombia, the state formation process since independence has been characterised by a fragmentation of the territory, regions, and population. To understand the nature of the Colombian state, it is fundamental to understand this process of fragmentation and the reasons behind the differences and confluences within the many Colombian departments. It is key as well to understand how these variations are related to the dynamics of political violence, to the armed conflict, and to the uneven presence of the state.⁵²⁷ In this regard, Vásquez argues that the differentiated development of settlement processes, the uneven insertion of these processes within national and international economic development, the formation of different and diverse social and political identities, and their differentiated relations with state institutions and political parties, are all key elements in understanding both in space and time the current situation.⁵²⁸ Following the same line, Gutiérrez Lemus shows that natural resources, territories, capital, and population are central elements to any understanding of the different

⁵²³ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 43.

⁵²⁴ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 76-77.

⁵²⁵ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 78.

⁵²⁶ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 78.

⁵²⁷ Gutiérrez Lemus, O.J. 'La configuración espacial. Una visión histórica y sociológica', in *Conflicto y territorio en el oriente colombiano* (Bogotá, Odecofi-CINEP, 2012) pp. 27-28.

⁵²⁸ Vásquez, T. 'La dinámica macrorregional del conflicto armado: la paz, el desarrollo, y la política', in *Una nueva guerra en un nuevo contexto. Conflicto y territorio en el sur de Colombia*, edited by Restrepo, J.A. et al. (Bogotá, Editorial Pontificia, Cinep, Cerac, Odecofi, Colciencias, 2011) pp. 299.

spatial configuration achieved in Colombia, the presence of the state, and the emergence of distinct social and political orders.⁵²⁹ This Colombian school has combined history and political science with anthropology and geography to develop a socio-spatial analysis of political violence and state formation in Colombia. Its members show how different actors have contributed to make spaces of representation and spatialities based on specific social relations of production (the *encomienda*, the *hacienda*, and liberal and neoliberal modes of production), out of which have grown different social, cultural, and political forms of organisation. The latter were the result of struggles between owners of the means of production on one hand (*encomenderos*, *hacenderos*, large landowners, the state, multinational companies), seeking to achieve social and political control over both population and territory, and subaltern groups (settlers, peasants, indigenous people, amongst others) trying to escape or resist this control. In this chapter, I look at the spatial dimension of these struggles. I draw a parallel between the elements mentioned by Gutiérrez Lemus – natural resources, territories, capital, and population – and the concepts of place, scale, networks, and territory, widely used in the discipline of human geography. The latter concepts can indeed be used to explain the formation of spaces of representation and spatialities in Colombia. In this regard, I show below how peasant communities have developed strategies to challenge these spaces and spatialities by using places, scales, and networks to establish some kind of control over a territory.

Places, Scales, Networks, and Territories

Recent debates about the integration of a spatial dimension into social science analyses should not privilege any of the many dimensions of space.⁵³⁰ Jessop points to the limits of focusing the analysis on one of these dimensions only and argues for the need to recognise the multiple dimensions of space and its polymorphy in sociospatial theory. This would allow for a more complete depiction and analysis of the ‘the organisation of sociospatial relations in multiple forms and dimensions’.⁵³¹ According to Jessop *et al.*, ‘sociospatial theory is most powerful when it (a) refers to historically specific geographies of social relations; and (b) explores contextual and historical variation in the structural coupling, strategic coordination,

⁵²⁹ Gutiérrez Lemus, O.J. 'La configuración espacial', p. 58.

⁵³⁰ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing'; Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities'.

⁵³¹ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 389.

and forms of interconnection among the different dimensions of the latter'.⁵³² Similarly, Leitner *et al.* argue that analyses of social movements and contentious politics should not privilege any of the multiple dimensions of space. In practice, social movements indeed draw on several dimensions at once. They therefore stress the importance to analyse the 'co-implication' of these spatialities and argue that

In determining how geography matters, we assert that a priori decisions (ontological or otherwise) to reduce this multi-valency to any single master concept can only impoverish analysis, by offering a partial viewpoint into how geography matters in contentious politics. Further, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the pertinence of particular spatialities in particular contexts, but also to their co-implication. It is not simply a question of the co-presence of the pertinent spatialities, but also how they shape one another and, thereby, the trajectory of contentious politics.⁵³³

This emphasis on the multiple dimensions of space form the basis of my analysis of the strategies used by peasant communities to assert their control over a territory.

I decided to draw on the theoretical framework provided by Jessop *et al.*, which they call the TPSN framework. Table 1 gives a visual illustration of this framework as described by the authors. I will now briefly define the concepts of territory, place, scale and network.

Table 1. Four key dimensions of sociospatial relations. Source Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 26:3 (2008) p. 393.

Dimension of sociospatial relations	Principle of sociospatial structuration	Associated patterning of sociospatial relations
Territory	Bordering, bounding, Dividing land into parcels, enclosure	Construction of inside/outside divides; constitutive role of the outside
Place	Proximity, spatial embedding, areal differentiation	Construction of spatial divisions of labour; differentiation of social relations horizontally among 'core' verse peripheral places
Scale	Hierarchisation, vertical differentiation	Construction of scalar divisions of labour; differentiation of social relations vertically among 'dominant', 'nodal', and 'marginal' scales
Networks/reticulations	Interconnectivity, interdependence, transversal or 'rhizomatic' differentiation	Building networks of nodal connectivity; differentiation of social relations among nodal points within topological networks

The concept of territory has traditionally been associated with the space occupied by the state. However, a territory can refer to any bounded land united by political, social,

⁵³² Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 392.

⁵³³ Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities', p. 158.

economic, or cultural activities. Notions of borders, inside/outside, division of lands into parcels, or enclosure are crucial to any understanding of territorial practices and the construction of a specific territory.⁵³⁴ The notion of territory is actually very important for the analysis of peasant communities, as the territory is precisely what they claim they have to defend. In addition to this protection dimension, the territory also shapes the identity of peasant communities through a strong feeling of belonging to the land. Finally, the territory is also a space that they have to shape, construct, and make, and which will play a crucial role in their resistance. Some academics working on Colombia have used the notion of territoriality to analyse how territories are shaped, formed, or constructed, therefore moving away from the state-influenced concept of territory.⁵³⁵ In this regard, the concept of territoriality not only deals with the appropriation of a delimited space by a state or any other group seeking power, but also refers to the belonging to a territory through a process of identification and representation, either collective or individual. This process often ignores classic political or administrative borders.⁵³⁶ In the following section, I show how peasant communities contest the appropriation of the territory by the state and illegal armed groups and try to establish an organic relationship with the territory they inhabit.

Jessop defines place as 'the socially produced grids and horizons of social life'.⁵³⁷ This points to the fact that 'places are sites where people live, work and move, and where they form attachments, practice their relations with each other, and relate to the rest of the world'.⁵³⁸ As a result, places have a distinct materiality that shape not only social interaction but also social movements and the many strategies available to them as well.⁵³⁹ Jessop argues that place 'offers a whole series of strategically selective possibilities to develop social relations that stretch over space and time'.⁵⁴⁰ However, social movements also assign meanings to places, be they antagonistic, neutral, or friendly places. In this regard, places might be crucially important for the identity, memory, and social fabric of social movements. This is the case for peasant communities. Places can also be conceptualised as spaces outside the reach of power structures, where people can safely design strategies of resistance to

⁵³⁴ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 393.

⁵³⁵ González, F.E. *Poder*.

⁵³⁶ Gouëset, V. 'El territorio colombiano y sus márgenes', pp. 79-80.

⁵³⁷ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci as a spatial theorist', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8:4 (2005) p. 424.

⁵³⁸ Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities', p. 161.

⁵³⁹ Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities', p. 161.

⁵⁴⁰ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', pp. 424-425.

hegemonic practices, or as 'cultural arenas'⁵⁴¹ where people develop alternative visions of society to the ones imposed by the power of hegemonic or dominant actors. The peasant communities of the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC have all created such places.

The term 'scale' has usually been employed to refer to the boundaries or levels created by the organisation of social relations; of spaces of many different sizes, such as the local or the global scale; of national or the international scale; or even of regional or world scale. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that scales are not fixed, a-historical spaces. Scales should not be treated as the fixed levels of analysis of IR theory or peacebuilding and statebuilding studies.⁵⁴² Rather, a growing literature on the political economy of scale in human geography points to the fact that scales are the product of political and social struggles over space and across time.⁵⁴³ Scale is therefore conceptualised

...as a relational, power-laden and contested construction that actors strategically engage with, in order to legitimise or challenge existing power relations. In the course of these struggles new scales are constructed, and the relative importance of different scales is reconfigured. Central to the politics of scale is the manipulation of relations of power and authority. This process is highly contested, involving numerous negotiations and struggles between different actors as they attempt to reshape the scalar spatiality of power and authority.⁵⁴⁴

However, my interest is not in the production of scales as such but in the politics of scale or scalar politics⁵⁴⁵ developed by subaltern groups or social movements. Such a politics of scale assumes that 'the social power that can be mobilised is dependent on the scale or spatial level at which social actors operate'.⁵⁴⁶ As a result, 'the success or effectiveness of social and political strategies for empowerment is related to the ways in which geographical scale is actively considered and mobilised in struggles for social, political, or economic resistance or change'.⁵⁴⁷ An emphasis on the scalar strategies of peasant communities is in line with the fact that 'it is often not scale per se that is the prime object of contestation between social actors, but rather specific processes and institutionalized practices that are themselves

⁵⁴¹ Kappler, S. 'Everyday Legitimacy'.

⁵⁴² Delaney, D. and Leitner, H. 'The political construction of scale', *Political Geography*, 16:2 (1997) p. 93.

⁵⁴³ Brenner, N. 'State territorial restructuring and the production of spatial scale', *Political Geography*, 16:4 (1997) pp. 273-306; Hesketh, C. 'From passive revolution'; Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing'; Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities'; Pile, S. and Keith, M. (eds.) *Geographies*.; Smith, N. 'Remaking Scale: Competition and Cooperation in Pre-National and Post-National Europe', in *State/Space: A Reader*.; Swyngedouw, E. 'Authoritarian governance, power, and the politics of rescaling', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18:1 (2000) pp. 63-76; Swyngedouw, E. 'Globalisation or "glocalisation"?'

⁵⁴⁴ Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities', p. 159.

⁵⁴⁵ MacKinnon, D. 'Reconstructing scale: towards a new scalar politics', *Progress in Human Geography*, 35:1 (2010) pp. 21-36.

⁵⁴⁶ Swyngedouw, E. 'Globalisation or "glocalisation"?', pp. 26-27

⁵⁴⁷ Swyngedouw, E. 'Globalisation or "glocalisation"?', pp. 26-27

differentially scaled'.⁵⁴⁸ Finally, in addition to the political dimension of the production of scales, Smith points to the fact that the production of scales is also a cultural process, as 'individual and group identities are heavily tintured by attachments to place at different scales'.⁵⁴⁹ Drawing on these insights about scales, I analyse the politics of scale used by peasant communities in a relational way. Indeed, peasant communities and scales mutually constitute each other, something that I began to show in the previous chapter. But in addition to being the product of the interactions, connections, and conflicts between different scales, peasant communities use and shape scales to assert their control over a territory.

Finally, networks have been described as a key strategy used by social movements to challenge structures of power. Leitner *et al.* argue that 'such networks are crucial for sharing knowledge about strategies and tactics, and developing common political identities and alternative imaginaries'.⁵⁵⁰ Networks are key to the emergence of those individuals whom Keck and Sikkink have called 'activists beyond borders'.⁵⁵¹ What Featherstone has termed 'counter-global networks' have given rise to 'geographies of connection that have shaped forms of opposition to dominant forms of globalised practices'.⁵⁵² Featherstone defines networks 'as the overlapping and contested material, cultural and political flows and circuits that bind different places together through differentiated relations of power'.⁵⁵³ Peasant communities are themselves both the product and the promoters of such networks at different scales, between different places, and connecting different territories.

Table 2. *The sites of one-dimensionality.* Source: Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26:3 (2008) p. 393.

Abstract – simple point of entry	Field of application			
	Territory	Place	Scale	Network
Territory	Methodological territorialism			
Place		Place-centrism		
Scale			Scale-centrism	
Network				Network-centrism

⁵⁴⁸ MacKinnon, D. 'Reconstructing scale', pp. 22-23.

⁵⁴⁹ Smith, N. 'Remaking Scale', p. 230.

⁵⁵⁰ Leitner, H. et al. 'The spatialities', p. 162.

⁵⁵¹ Keck, M. and Sikkink, K. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵² Featherstone, D. *Resistance*, p. 2.

⁵⁵³ Featherstone, D. *Resistance*, p. 4.

While looking at peasant communities through a supposed god's eye is impossible, I argue that the combination of these sociospatial dimensions has several advantages. In comparison to historical and normative approaches to the study of civil resistance initiatives, which are often too descriptive in my view, the TPSN framework provides a more complete and analytical explanation of the strategies used by peasant communities in order to assert their control over a territory and 'make' this territory.

To avoid falling into the trap of one-dimensional analyses, which Table 2 illustrates, Jessop *et al.* argue that investigations into 'the mutually constitutive relations among their structuring principles [of the territory, place, scale, and network] and the specific practices associated with each of the latter' are required.⁵⁵⁴ In this chapter, I therefore analyse the strategies used by peasant communities through the practices related to each of the sociospatial dimensions mentioned, and relate them in turn to the structuring principles of territory, place, scale, and network. The application of the TPSN framework to peasant communities follows and expands on the suggestion that this framework of analysis can inform the analysis of social movements and contentious politics. In this regard, Jessop *et al.* suggest that it could be deployed in order to 'decipher the strategies and tactics of individual and collective agents, organizations, and institutions that are engaged in contentious politics as they perceive them as participants'. According to them, 'the TPSN schema could provide a basis for deciphering the variegated, polymorphic spaces of contention that have been produced through different types of social mobilization in different historical – geographical contexts'.⁵⁵⁵ In this chapter I apply the TPSN schema to peasant communities and their strategies as emergent strategies oriented towards the transformation of previous socio-spatial relations informed by the landscapes of territory, place, scale, and networks. As Jessop *et al.* put it:

...the actualization of specific sociospatial possibilities, in any TPSN combination, involves material interactions among different structures and strategies that draw upon these principles of sociospatial organization in differential, historically, and geographically specific ways. This structuration process imposes determinate limits on the form, shape, and trajectory of present and future TPSN combinations and on the sociospatial relations through which they are mediated, produced, and transformed.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 393.

⁵⁵⁵ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 398.

⁵⁵⁶ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 394.

In this chapter, I analyse how peasant communities assert their control over one of these sociospatial dimensions, the territory. My analysis mainly explores the territory as a structured field, ‘produced in part through the impact of other sociospatial structuring principles on territorial dynamics’.⁵⁵⁷ This refers to the vertical column in Table 3. However, I will also pay attention to the interactions between the structuring principles and practices related to the three other sociospatial dimensions, namely place, scale and network.

Table 3. Beyond one-dimensionalism: conceptual orientations Source: Jessop, B. et al.. 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 26:3 (2008) p. 395.

Structuring principles	Field of operation			
	Territory	Place	Scale	Network
Territory	Past, present, and emergent frontiers borders, boundaries.	Distinct places in a given territory	Multilevel government	Interstate system, state alliances, multi-area government
Place	Core-periphery, borderlands, empires, neo-medievalism	Locales, mileux, cities, sites, regions, localities, globalities	Division of labour linked to different scaled places	Local/urban governance, partnership
Scale	Scalar division of political power (unitary state, federal state, etc.)	Scale as area rather than level (local through global), spatial division of labour (Russian doll)	Vertical ontology based on nested or tangled hierarchies	Parallel power networks, non-governmental international regimes
Network	Origin-edge, ripple effects (radiation), stretching and folding, crossborder region, interstate system	Global city networks, polynucleated cities, intermeshed sites	Flat ontology with multiple, ascalar entry points	Networks of networks, spaces of flows, rhizome

In the rest of this chapter, I combine this TPSN framework with Gramsci’s concepts of hegemony and war of position. Before getting into the empirical analysis of peasant communities’ strategies, I briefly address the links between Gramsci’s concepts and the TPSN framework. I show how hegemony can be spatially contested through a war of position involving the use of places, scales and networks.

⁵⁵⁷ Jessop, B. et al. 'Theorizing', p. 396.

Spatialising Gramsci: the spatial dimensions of power and hegemony

Gramsci's spatial awareness

Soja argues that a spatial dimension can be found in Gramsci's thought.⁵⁵⁸ According to him, Gramsci's studies represented a 'general effort to focus attention upon the political, cultural, and ideological dimensions of capitalism [...] and, especially, to elaborate upon the role of the modern capitalist state and its imposed territorial division of labour'.⁵⁵⁹ Soja carries on, claiming that by emphasising the ensemble of social relations, Gramsci 'concretized the mode of production in time and space, in history and geography, in a specified conjunctural framework which became the necessary context for revolutionary strategy'.⁵⁶⁰ Although not explicit, this spatial dimension was present in Gramsci's writings and 'clearly evident in the spatial relations embedded in the social formation and in the particularities of place, location, and territorial community'.⁵⁶¹ Soja shows how Gramsci locates revolutionary strategy within three key arenas of social relations, 'all linked in one way or another to the spatiality of social life under capitalism'.⁵⁶² First, on the level of political and ideological structures, Gramsci shows an awareness of the socio-spatial dialectic, in that he emphasises the relationship between occupational and territorial structures. Second, Gramsci relates the exploitation of the working class to specific places, such as their homes and workplace, 'the point of consumption and reproduction versus the point of production'. Third, Soja argues that 'these two strategic emphases came together again in Gramsci's conceptualisation of the revolutionary historical bloc, an alliance of popular movements fighting for similar goals and linked conjuncturally to the specific conditions of capitalist crisis'.⁵⁶³ This anti-reductionism that emphasises political, cultural, and ideological conditions means that revolutionary consciousness was from now on rooted in 'the phenomenology of everyday life'.⁵⁶⁴

However, Soja is not the only one pointing to the relevance of Gramsci's writings for thinking about the socio-spatial dialectic. Jessop argues that 'Gramsci's philosophy of praxis involves not only the historicisation but also the spatialisation of its analytical categories'.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁸ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 89.

⁵⁵⁹ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 89.

⁵⁶⁰ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 89.

⁵⁶¹ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 89-90.

⁵⁶² Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 90.

⁵⁶³ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 90.

⁵⁶⁴ Soja, E.W. *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 90.

⁵⁶⁵ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', p. 421.

Although Gramsci did not make spatial thinking explicit, Jessop claims that Gramsci was as sensitive to the historical specificity of all social relations as he was to their specific location in place, space, and scale.⁵⁶⁶ Jessop not only considers Gramsci's use of spatial metaphors, but also draws attention to Gramsci's analyses of the inherent spatiality as well as temporality of social relations⁵⁶⁷:

We should also consider [Gramsci's] interest in the actual rather than metaphorical spatiality of social relations and practices, in their spatial conditioning and in the relevance of social relations and practices to spatial issues. For Gramsci was not only sensitive to the historical specificity of all social relations (..) but also to their specific location in place, space and scale. Indeed, these two are clearly interconnected in any ensemble of social relations.⁵⁶⁸

Gramsci's concepts were therefore sensitive to issues of place, scale, networks, and territory. Even more interesting is the fact that Gramsci's interest in the spatial dimension of social relations was not only academic. This attention to space was also rooted in a deep awareness that the strategies of subaltern groups must be spatial,⁵⁶⁹ as the strategies used by both capitalism and the ruling elites also are. Hegemony is not only social but spatial as well.⁵⁷⁰

Hegemony and space

In *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis*, Joseph develops an argument about the relationship between hegemony and space.⁵⁷¹ He argues that hegemony plays a role in reproducing the social space of society and ensuring its cohesion. In addition, hegemony binds space and time by working 'alongside ideology in developing representations of space which are tied to the dominant material practices'.⁵⁷² From this, Joseph distinguishes between three distinct conceptions of space: as a field of action, as representations, and as a basis of action. He sums up the relationship between these three conceptions:

Space and ideology are inextricably bound in a basic material sense. Space acts as the site of ideological articulation and symbolic interaction. Space, in short, is representational, and, of course, the control of representation is crucial to the process of hegemonising. So from these material relations arise strategic relations, driven by hegemonising processes. The relation between space and ideology is both given and potential. Out of the necessary relation come different articulations and projects. Space is both necessary to the reproduction of ideology and the terrain for its application. As our earlier distinction between secreted and articulated ideologies indicates, the production of ideology is used strategically.

⁵⁶⁶ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', p. 424.

⁵⁶⁷ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', p. 421.

⁵⁶⁸ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', pp. 423-424.

⁵⁶⁹ Jessop, B. 'Gramsci', p. 435.

⁵⁷⁰ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*.

⁵⁷¹ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁷² Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 174.

Hegemonic projects and practices involve the articulation of ideology in conjunction with control over space.⁵⁷³

The connection between ideology and control over space means that ideological location as identity is reinforced and articulated by physical location. In my analysis of the spatial strategies used by peasant communities, I pay special attention to the articulation between the principles and conception of the world analysed in the previous chapter on one hand, and their territories on the other. In the case of peasant communities, that means that their place within society, both in terms of political power and legal rights, is linked to their ability to assert their control over the territory they occupy. The latter is in turn achieved through the deployment of strategies which Gramsci would call a war of position.

Place is key to the design of resistance strategies. Without a place, social movements or individuals are bound to use tactics as a means of finding their own places within structures of power.⁵⁷⁴ Everyday resistance has no place of its own. Within the everyday, people find their way through networks of power relations through ruse, tricks, appropriation of rules, principles, and norms imposed from above, but they do not pose a challenge to these networks of power. For this to happen, resistance has to produce its own space from which to design alternative or counter-hegemonic practices and ideologies. This is where Gramsci's concept of war of position is most useful, as it consists in building the trenches and permanent fortifications which will allow a particular social group to achieve control over space, and thus hegemony within civil society and the state as a whole.

By linking these insights to the TPSN framework and the concepts of space of representation and spatialities, my contention is that a war of position involves the strategic use and combination of places, scales, networks, and territories, leading to the making of spatialities. The ability of peasant communities to assert their control over a territory is based on how well they move between scales, mobilise networks, and fill their territory with places. All four dimensions of space interact with each other in the strategies of peasant communities. The rest of this chapter analyses these strategies.

⁵⁷³ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 174.

⁵⁷⁴ de Certeau, M. *L'invention du quotidien, tome 1 : Arts de faire*, (Paris, Gallimard, 1990); Pile, S. and Keith, M. (eds.) *Geographies*.

The spatial and territorial strategies of peasant communities: territory, place, scale, and networks

The analysis of the strategies employed by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC reveals the crucial role that space plays in the success of their initiatives. The meaning of the resistance of peasant communities is intimately tied to the territory. Resisting means staying on the land, and working, and cultivating it. One of the leaders of the ACVC I interviewed used the Spanish verb *ejercer* – which inspired the title of this chapter – to explain the meaning of the relationship between peasants and the land. The use of this verb is very interesting in that it conveys the very practical, affirmative and active attitude that peasants have regarding the territory. This contrasts with the way the peasants' use of the land is usually described, as backward, pre-modern, and preventing any modern economic development. Literally, *ejercer* means practising, making, exercising, or exerting, as in making a manufactured product, practising a profession, exercising a right, or exerting influence or pressure. Peasants *do* something with the territory; they are not idle. The territory is not only there to produce the means of subsistence for peasants. They also have to make something out of the territory, shape it, and mould it according to their cultural, social, economic, and political needs. In the rest of this chapter, I compare this exercise of 'practising the territory' to Gramsci's concept of a war of position. The latter involves the promotion of principles at different scales and their association with different places, the connection of these places within wider networks of power, and the gaining of positions within these same networks, to protect and appropriate a territory and produce on it. Both territory and land form the material basis of the political economy promoted by peasant communities to bring about social change and build peace.

The struggle for the territory led by peasant communities is characterised by processes of protection and appropriation at the level of superstructures, i.e., ideology, law, politics, and culture, and processes of production at the structural level, i.e., the economy. These processes imply a struggle for the representation of this territory; efforts to base peasant initiatives on legal and normative grounds; the building of protection networks at different scales and in different places; the binding of communities' collective memory with particular places within the territory; and the development of economic projects. These processes finally converge towards the development of a political economy for peace which

fulfils peasants' needs to survive in the midst of armed conflict and eventually build peace. While material needs inform the struggle and strategies of peasant communities, representations, norms, politics, and culture ultimately shape the development of economic alternatives. The territory is the space where power relations are challenged through spatial strategies of protection, appropriation, and production. These strategies characterise the war of position led by peasant communities.

Protection

The protection strategies developed by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC all combine place, scales, and networks to achieve some control over their territory and protect peasants. The normative aspect of these strategies, the principles of neutrality and non-violence, have often been highlighted to explain how protection worked.⁵⁷⁵ However, I show in this section that effective protection also depends on political relations of power at the national and international scales, and on peasants' ability to rebuild the social fabric of their community. Indeed, while the success of these strategies depends on peasant communities' ability to control representation, both in their relation to illegal armed actors and institutional actors, it then also relies on their capacity to use scales, mobilise networks, and create safe places for the growth and strengthening of social bonds within their community. The concepts of scales, places, and networks therefore allow me to go beyond a mere normative and legal analysis of the protection strategies employed by peasant communities to confront armed actors, challenge the state, and build their internal strength and cohesion. These strategies required gaining positions at local, national, and international scales, and connecting these positions within networks aimed at the protection of specific places and territories.

The first task the ATCC, the CdPSJA, and the ACVC were confronted with was to protect themselves from the actions of armed actors, both legal and illegal. As I have shown in the previous chapter, all three communities have put non-violence and neutrality at the core of their new critical consciousness, as the most effective way to establish a distinction between combatants and civilians. This positioning was, and still is, key to their protection and

⁵⁷⁵ Anrup, R. and Español, J. 'Una comunidad de paz'.

autonomy. In all three cases, these principles allowed peasant communities to undermine the control of armed actors over both their territory and their members by breaking the dynamics and logics of their domination, which ultimately relied on the cooperation of peasants. However, the form of these mechanisms differed, leading to different meanings and practice of neutrality and non-violence. While the ATCC put in place mechanisms of direct dialogue and confrontation with armed actors, the CdPSJA aimed to mitigate violence by relying on actors and networks at the international scale, and the ACVC combined these two aspects.

The ATCC developed four specific mechanisms to put into practise the principles of neutrality and non-violence. The best known of these mechanisms is represented by the dialogues that the ATCC engaged in with all armed actors. However, intra-community dialogues, denunciations, and conflict management have all contributed to the implementation and success of the neutrality and non-violence principles. In May 1987, after receiving an ultimatum issued by the army and paramilitary groups, giving peasants the choice to displace, join one of the armed groups, or be killed, around 50 peasants decided to hold a meeting with the FARC units present in the region. This meeting, held on 21 May 1987, is recorded as the foundational event during which peasants managed to break the law of silence⁵⁷⁶ and were considered by the FARC as a valid interlocutor.⁵⁷⁷ The leader of the group, Josué Vargas, directly confronted the FARC and formulated the conditions raised by the peasants of La India. The peasants asked that the FARC not kill any more peasants, and insisted that they would not help or support the FARC anymore. They also made clear they would not accept orders or conditions from the guerrilla group, and that FARC soldiers should not visit peasants' homes anymore. A fifth condition sarcastically urged FARC members to get a proper job.⁵⁷⁸ About two weeks later, on 11 June, a second meeting was held with the FARC, this time in presence of one of the FARC chiefs of staff. Around 3000 peasants attended the meeting, in which the FARC agreed to the first four points mentioned. The peasants of La India committed to withdraw any help or support to the guerrillas, army. or paramilitary groups, whereas the FARC agreed not to assert any kind of political pressure against civilians: no more visits to peasants' homes or meetings in the schools of the area. The FARC agreed

⁵⁷⁶ Archivo ATCC, Acta n°41. Caja 2/Carpeta 1 c.2/1

⁵⁷⁷ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 334.

⁵⁷⁸ Sanz de Santamaría, A. 'El camino hacia la paz ¿Negociación y estrategia o comprensión y confianza?' *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 2:Diciembre (1998) pp. 89–99.

not to intervene within peasants' internal affairs and would stop managing conflicts between peasants. Instead, peasants themselves committed to solving their internal conflicts, be they social, economic, or political. Finally, both the FARC and the peasants agreed to meet every time the situation required.⁵⁷⁹ In parallel to the dialogues with the FARC, the peasants of La India also started talks with the army. Two meetings took place on 28 May and 5 July. The first happened during a visit of the armed forces chief commander to the hamlet of La India. While during this first meeting, the commander only offered rhetorical support,⁵⁸⁰ the outcome of the second meeting, in the presence of 5000 peasants, was much more interesting. Whereas paramilitary groups had only unofficially attended the meeting and did not speak at all, they later on withdrew their permanent presence in La India. The link between the army and paramilitary groups was made obvious, and the ATCC carried on speaking to the army if it wanted something from the paramilitary groups. They proceeded like that until after the killing of the first leaders of the association in February 1990, after which they engaged in direct dialogue with the paramilitary groups. After the 5 July meeting, the army committed not to violate peasants' rights. In turn, the ATCC agreed to deal with and solve the community's internal conflicts and to watch over the behaviour of its members. But most importantly for the good functioning of the dialogues, the ATCC committed to 'inform the army, the guerrilla and paramilitary groups of all meetings and agreements reached with any one of them'. The ATCC would also be transparent regarding its own activities.⁵⁸¹ According to the president of the ATCC at the time when I conducted my research interviews, rather than generating power, these dialogues allowed the ATCC to achieve 'equal status' with the armed groups. He argues that 'from the moment when there was the need for dialogue, armed force was not imposed upon us'.⁵⁸² He added that dialogues had to be transparent, collective, and held with senior commanders.⁵⁸³ These dialogues were successful in considerably reducing violence between 1987 and 2000.⁵⁸⁴ However, my contention is that they did not allow the ATCC to solidly establish a territorial control over its sphere of influence, as the ATCC lacked the ability to use scale and mobilise networks beyond a regional scale. In fact, the success of the ATCC heavily relied on two other mechanisms,

⁵⁷⁹ Archivo ATCC, Documento Análisis de acontecimientos históricos - Edgar Orlando Gaitán Camacho. Caja 12/Carpeta 9 c.12

⁵⁸⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 336.

⁵⁸¹ Archivo ATCC, Documento Análisis de acontecimientos históricos - Edgar Orlando Gaitán Camacho. Caja 12/Carpeta 9 c.12

⁵⁸² ATCC#3.

⁵⁸³ ATCC#3.

⁵⁸⁴ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians'.

namely the intra-community dialogue and the organisation's investigatory capacity to deal with threats from armed actors and resolve internal conflicts. I have already analysed in detail the first mechanism, closely linked to the ATCC's new critical consciousness, which allowed peasants to break the law of silence, organise the resistance to armed actors, and agree on principles to guide peasants' behaviour. The second mechanism transformed the ATCC into a true conflict resolution body and an institution in charge of controlling social order, solving conflicts between peasants, and dealing with threats issued by armed actors against members of the ATCC.⁵⁸⁵ It is this mechanism which gave the ATCC its social and political power over its sphere of influence, and prevented armed actors from taking advantage of conflicts between peasants to assert their control and domination.⁵⁸⁶

What is relevant here is the fact that these intra-community dialogues and this conciliation function were also key in maintaining coherence between principles and actions within peasants' behaviour and practices until the beginning of the 2000s. But when they became weaker, as demands for regulation overcame the ATCC's capacities, and adherence to the ATCC's principles decreased, the ATCC proved less able to control armed actor's activities within its sphere of influence. For instance, a surge in the cultivation of coca crops occurred at the beginning of the 2000s and the ATCC could not contain the expansion of coca crops cultivated by peasants.⁵⁸⁷ The minutes of several meetings with paramilitary groups and guerrillas show that these groups took advantage of this weakness to challenge the ATCC's principles and interfere within its affairs. They often tried to challenge the degree to which ATCC members followed these principles, and impose their own agendas onto the ATCC.⁵⁸⁸ In a meeting between the ATCC and the AUC on 15 November 2001, the AUC commander said:

It is good to meet with the community, given that people from the Carare [region] are branded as guerrilla members; so it is better to clarify doubts, because where there is doubt, there is no tranquillity, neither peace. We have always respected civilians and what we do not want is that guerrilla members camouflages as peasants. The best thing is to seek dialogue, I invite the community to speak without fear, the objective is to correct mistakes and that you are aware of our policies. We do not want to meet you as enemies but in search of friendship. We are going to clean this zone from any guerrilla presence

⁵⁸⁵ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians', pp. 355-356.

⁵⁸⁶ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 356-361.

⁵⁸⁷ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 408-409.

⁵⁸⁸ Archivo ATCC, Acta reunion ATCC y las FARC. Caja 2/Carpeta 9 c.2; Archivo ATCC, Acta No. 001. De reunión entre la junta directiva de la ATCC y el comandante de las autodefensas en el área de Cimitarra. 4 August 2001. Caja 2/Carpeta 11 c.2; Archivo ATCC, Acta No.002. De reunión celebrada entre representantes de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare ATCC y miembros de le estado mayor de las autodefensas unidas de Colombia en el corregimiento de San Fernando, municipio de Cimitarra. 8 October 2001 Caja 2/Carpeta 12 c.2; Archivo ATCC, Reunion ATCC-AUC. 1 February 2002. Caja 2/Carpeta 12 c.2; Archivo ATCC, Acta No 2. Reunion Comandante del Ejercito. 20 July 2002 Caja 2/Carpeta 12 c.2

and we will be there as long as required. With the efforts you have made today we will smooth things over. What we are seeking is to recover the territory.⁵⁸⁹

In another meeting, the same AUC commander stated that the AUC would 'only fulfil their responsibilities to the extent the ATCC fulfils its owns', adding that 'in this region nothing happens without authorization from this group [the AUC]'.⁵⁹⁰ The minutes of the meetings and workshops held by the ATCC in several hamlets in 2000 are illustrative of the organisation's difficulties to solve conflicts and internal problems, and to reach favourable agreements with armed actors.⁵⁹¹ The ATCC archives also show a tendency to rely more on the protection of the army from 2000 onward, as the dialogues with illegal armed actors proved difficult.⁵⁹²

The ATCC's protection strategies heavily relied on its capacity to persuade armed actors to respect civilians, and therefore on the consent of armed actors, on one hand, and on the strength of the ATCC's social fabric on the other. Its relationship with armed actors achieved equal status, as the quotation from the president of the ATCC explains, but the ATCC lacked the capacity to coerce armed actors. The limits of the ATCC's protection strategies were illustrated by the massacre of its first leaders. Dialogues with armed actors were not able to prevent these killings and counter the negative impact of their strategies of open denunciation and confrontation with armed actors. On 26 February 1990, the three most prominent ATCC leaders were assassinated together with a Colombian journalist working for the BBC, Silvia Margarita Duzán. While the responsibility of this massacre can only be attributed to those who committed it, most likely paramilitary groups,⁵⁹³ the use of violence by these groups has been characterised by some members of the ATCC as a reaction to the strategy of overt confrontation and denunciation of armed actors' crimes used by the leaders of the Association.⁵⁹⁴ One of my interviewees termed the massacre as a 'failure' of the leadership of the association, as they did not realise what the consequences of their actions would be.⁵⁹⁵ This strategy of overt political confrontation with paramilitary groups and their

⁵⁸⁹ Archivo ATCC, Acta No. 3. Reunion ATCC-Alto mando de AUC Puerto Boyaca. 15 November 2001. Caja 2/Carpeta 11 c.2

⁵⁹⁰ Archivo ATCC, Acta No.002. De reunión celebrada entre representantes de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare ATCC y miembros de le estado mayor de las autodefensas unidas de Colombia en el corregimiento de San Fernando, municipio de Cimitarra. 8 October 2001 Caja 2/Carpeta 12 c.2.

⁵⁹¹ Archivo ATCC, Caja 2/Carpeta 9 c.2.

⁵⁹² Archivo ATCC, Acta de reuniones de directivos. 27 December 2003. Caja 2 Actas/Carpeta 13 c.2.

⁵⁹³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 258.

⁵⁹⁴ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 353-355.

⁵⁹⁵ ATCC#11, La India, 9 de Mayo 2014.

supporter represented a threat to the latter's interests, which they decided to address by killing the leaders of the ATCC. Although the Association had received institutional support from local authorities and gained international recognition in December 1990 when it was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, its lack of connections and influence at national and international scale meant that dissuasion was not high enough to increase the cost of such attacks and thus prevent them. For the authors of this massacre, the cost of having their illegal activities made visible and denounced at national and international scale was higher than the cost of killing the ATCC leaders and the BBC journalist. The massacre of the ATCC leaders showed the limits of the strategies and mechanisms used by the association so far. After this episode, the next leaders abandoned the overt confrontation of armed actors and limited their denunciations to legal claims and the collection of information for use in legal proceedings.

The examples of the CdPSJA and the ACVC illustrate how peasant communities could generate coercion using scales and the mobilisation of protection networks. In particular, power relationships at national and international scales and opportunities to connect with wider networks at the same scale impacted how peasant communities managed to protect their territory and members. These power relationships influenced the cost of using violence for paramilitary groups and the state to coerce peasant communities, although they offered no guarantee that violence would not be used. Both these organisations have developed strong protection networks at the regional, national, and international scales, and have made strategic use of a discourse based on human rights and international law. This has allowed them to carry on speaking up in public and disseminating their denunciations. Although this does not come without risk, the fact that they could carry on denouncing human rights violations and other crimes committed by armed groups reflects their ability to develop protection networks at national and international scale, making good use of power relationships between international actors, most of all states and NGOs, and the Colombian state. This international support is considered a key factor by both communities. One of the former presidents of the ACVC mentions the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as key supporters in the years following the creation of the Association.⁵⁹⁶ Another leader⁵⁹⁷ explains how the ability to speak up and denounce not only

⁵⁹⁶ ACVC#11, Puerto Matilde, 2 May 2014.

⁵⁹⁷ ACVC#14, Puerto Matilde, 3 de Mayo 2014.

the armed actors' abuses but also the effects of coca fumigation programmes implemented by the government, was obtained through the development of networks connecting the local experience of peasants, regional and national human rights organisations, and international actors. They explain that ideas about human rights were spread through social organisations based in Barrancabermeja, such as the Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS) and the Grassroots Women's Organisation (OFP), and connected with local peasant-led initiatives and protests born in the 1980s. This encouraged peasants to 'establish [themselves] as projects',⁵⁹⁸ in particular with the help of the Magdalena Medio Development and Peace Program. Before that, until the mid-1990s, the peasants of the Magdalena Medio region had engaged in dialogues with the guerrillas and the army in order to gain respect for civilians, although these dialogues were not as formal as those led by the ATCC. The leader already quoted⁵⁹⁹ explained that these uncoordinated efforts were not successful, as every time peasants came back from a protest, they suffered retaliations from paramilitary groups and the army. The action of local action councils, gathering peasants of a same hamlet, was not legally strong enough to deter illegal action by armed groups and get the government to protect peasants. After the hamlet of La Cooperativa was burnt by paramilitary groups in 1994, the director of this programme, Father Francisco de Roux, met with peasants of the region. According to the leader, he encouraged them to 'organise themselves, because the struggle is hard. The struggle is for the land. For oil and gold (...) There are paths to follow, this has to be brought to the United Nations', he said.⁶⁰⁰ The idea of creating an organisation whose aim would be to improve the respect of peasants' rights and promote a model of development in line with their needs was a direct response to this situation. Peasants were then able to transform the ACVC into a crucial node within wider networks at regional, national, and international scale. From then onwards, the ACVC was able to mobilise protection networks based on a human rights discourse, gain the necessary international support, and strengthen the social fabric of the 120 local action councils which make up its local base. The ACVC was also able to publicly denounce human rights violations committed by all armed actors as it generated political pressure on the government. Jerez mentions a 5-minute radio programme that used to be broadcasted with the sole purpose of denouncing

⁵⁹⁸ ACVC#14.

⁵⁹⁹ ACVC#14.

⁶⁰⁰ ACVC#14.

these violations.⁶⁰¹ All these efforts led to the creation of the ZRC, a territorial and legal initiative which is the most important tool used by the ACVC, not only for the protection of peasants but also for its strategies of appropriation and production, as I show later in this chapter.

The regional networks to which the ACVC was connected were linked to actors at national and international scales. Through the help of both traditional and organic intellectuals, such as Father Francisco de Roux and the leaders of the ACVC who went on advocacy tours in Europe and the USA, the ACVC could exert the necessary pressure on the Colombian state. The same leader quoted had the opportunity to go to Germany in order to 'present before the European community the human rights situation and the projects related to the defence of the territory and food sovereignty'.⁶⁰² They met with a member of the German Foreign Ministry and with German members of parliament (MoP) from different political parties. One of the MoPs agreed to ask the Colombian government to clarify the legal situation of Andres Gil, an ACVC leader who was jailed at the time, to legally recognise the ZRC, and to bring justice for the 16 cases of extrajudicial killing that took place in the zone.⁶⁰³ They said that they were 'not afraid' to tell diplomats that they were contributing to 'the fact that our country is intoxicated', given that the money they give to Colombia is used to fund military operations. But they also explained to them that they 'might not be responsible' because they are 'told [by the government] that here [in Colombia] they are killing guerrillas, but what they are killing is peasants and burning hamlets and fumigating lands'.⁶⁰⁴ All ACVC leaders are given the chance to go abroad for advocacy purposes. At the same time, this rotation contributes to their political formation.⁶⁰⁵

Resettlement processes led by all three communities are a good example of how they have used scales and mobilised networks for the protection of specific places. These processes also illustrate the connection between strategies of protection, strategies of appropriation, and strategies of production. Resettlement was first meant to resettle displaced peasants on their land, but it was also conceived of as a protection strategy. These protection strategies have allowed peasant communities to organise the resettlement of

⁶⁰¹ ACVC#1.

⁶⁰² Tierra, 'La dirigente campesina Irene Ramirez de gira en Alemania', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 1, Junio 2010, p. 11.

⁶⁰³ Tierra, 'La dirigente campesina Irene Ramirez de gira en Alemania'.

⁶⁰⁴ ACVC#14.

⁶⁰⁵ Tierra, 'La dirigente campesina Irene Ramirez de gira en Alemania'.

some of their members on the lands they used to live in before being displaced. In the case of the CdPSJA, some members could return to the hamlet of La Resbalosa with the support of the community. One of the leaders explains that the principles allow them to keep fighting and return to their land:

So this is why we stay alive, these principles were created (...), neutrality, no-collaboration with any [conflicting] parties, with this objective, because we say that this is a path [that we] built, it is a path of life. And we fight for the defense of our territory (...) We have carried out many returns [to our land] with the support of the community (...).⁶⁰⁶

He says that he himself returned to his hamlet with the support of the community. This is 'how people started to return to Mulatos as well (...). There, we then built, we started working on an idea, where Luis Eduardo Guerra was assassinated (...), like a small hamlet, the one that nowadays is known as the Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Hamlet'.⁶⁰⁷

This quotation shows how strategies of protection and processes of appropriation of the territory are intermingled. What started as a process to help families settle back on their land after being displaced was eventually accompanied by the creation of a specific place and its association with a specific meaning, a peace hamlet named after a member of the community assassinated by paramilitary groups in collaboration with the Army in February 2005. As Burnyeat explains, returning to their land was very important for the CdPSJA both to recover their rural way of life and to occupy territory in order to resist from new places and break the spatiality produced by armed actors and the conflict.⁶⁰⁸ In addition to re-appropriating and producing on them, this implied protecting them by occupying places within a territory, and connecting these places within wider protection networks and with actors at different scales.

The ATCC also promoted the return of displaced peasants by mobilising actors at regional and national scales. This is illustrated by a meeting convened and organised by the ATCC on 16 August 1987 which gathered around 8000 peasants in the village of Cimitarra. The aim of the meeting was to report abuses against civilians and promote the return to their land of peasants from the hamlet of La Corcovada. While peasants from La Corcovada had frequently been stigmatised as being guerrilla sympathisers, paramilitary groups had displaced the FARC guerrillas and used La Corcovada as one of their main bases in the area.

⁶⁰⁶ CdP#8, San José de Apartadó, 16 April 2014.

⁶⁰⁷ CdP#8.

⁶⁰⁸ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 86.

The presidential adviser for peace issues, the governor of the Department of Santander, and the commanders of the 2nd Division and the 14th Brigade attended the meeting. Josué Vargas, at the time the main leader and president of the ATCC, stated during this meeting that peasants needed an army which would protect them instead of harassing them, one that would put an end to the actions of the FARC guerrillas and the Muerte a Secuestradores (MAS) paramilitary group. He added that in order to truly rehabilitate the peasants of La Corcovada, the following points had to be addressed:

1. Return to their land of displaced people;
2. Credits which do not suppress the limited peasants resources;
3. Full involvement of the SENA with the agrarian sector;
4. Creation of a free-of-charge training centre on agricultural and industrial issues;
5. Continuation of the building and verification of the Carare region roads that are included in the National Rehabilitation Plan;
7. Administrative and financial counselling for the organisation of shops, cooperatives and peasant micro-enterprises;
8. Intervention of the INDERENA for the reforestation of the region.⁶⁰⁹

A few months after this meeting, 40 families went back to La India with the support of the ATCC, but only a few families managed to return to their land in La Corcovada.⁶¹⁰

Similarly, the unsuccessful attempts made by the CdPSJA to create humanitarian zones represented an effort to use a territorial and spatial concept in order to protect civilians in remote areas of the Serrania de Abibe, which had witnessed new forced displacements between 2003 and 2005. As the peace committees representing several hamlets located on the territory of the CdPSJA explain, the strategy of the army, in collaboration with paramilitary groups, seeks to 'empty the hamlets so that paramilitary groups take the land, as occurred in other years in the hamlets of Rodozali and Playa Larga'. The hamlet of Mulatos went from 98 families to 10 families in less than a year, as the 'loss of harvests, animals, the burning of their houses, trumped-up legal charges presenting them as places occupied by the guerrillas, tortures and murders', left them with no other choice than to flee. Faced with such violence these hamlets and the CdPSJA came up with the idea to set up humanitarian zones. These would be specific and delimited places where no armed actors are allowed. Two things are worth highlighting in this proposal. First, the initiative not only takes into account the protection needs of peasants, but also the 'organic' needs of the communities. On one hand, the proposal specifies that these zones 'aim to be a refuge when armed combats take place between armed actors'. The proposal also explains that these places 'cannot be bombed nor attacked'. The protection of the zones would ultimately rely on public denunciation of human

⁶⁰⁹ Archivo ATCC, Carta de Josué Vargas y Saul Castaneda a Carlos Ossa Escobar. 16 August 1987.

⁶¹⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 158-159.

rights violations and on the action of national and international actors, such as the *defensoria* and *procuraduria*, the Office of the United Nations for Human Rights (OHCHR), and embassies. On the other hand, 'these spaces require full respect as they will also be places where communities can gather in order to enable the hamlet to carry out its excellent community work, both reflective and educational'. Peace Committees were to be established in each hamlet and granted the task of coordinating the protection and organic elements of the proposal. 'Elected by the hamlet itself', the committee 'will be able to act on its behalf'. These committees will also 'work together with the other committees of the hamlet and the [internal] council of the Peace Community of San José for the planning of community and organisational work.' Finally, together with the Peace Community's Council, they will take part in the 'concertation meetings about the provisional measures with the state'. Second, the proposal also defines commitments which peasants are bound to respect in order to be allowed within the zones:

Within the peace zones – humanitarian zones – no armed actors will be allowed in, no arm or war artefact will be authorised, no information will be provided to any of the armed actors, no collaboration with them will be authorised. In addition, families that are part of the above-mentioned hamlets and that can take part in the peace zones – humanitarian zones – commit to fight against impunity, for truth, transparency regarding community and organisational actions, motivated by a peasant solidarity between hamlets and the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.⁶¹¹

Although the CdPSJA did set up these humanitarian zones and made their official recognition by the government one of four conditions to be met in order to renew dialogue, it did not manage to get the necessary political support for the initiative to be successful and be legally recognised by the Colombian government. The argument put forward is that humanitarian zones can only be created when there is an international conflict. There needs to be negotiations between parties in conflict for humanitarian zones to be recognised according to International Humanitarian Law.⁶¹² The government also argues that the CdPSJA does 'not acknowledge and refuses the presence of the state armed forces within the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, but also requires these to provide protection'. According to the government, this position is contradictory and amounts to 'claiming access to education

⁶¹¹ San José de Apartadó: Zonas Humanitarias, Lugares de paz. Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó, Comités de Paz de las veredas: La Cristalina, La Linda, Bellavista, Alto Bonito, Miramar, Arenas, Buenos Aires, Mulatos. Febrero 10 de 2005. Author's translation: En los lugares de paz – zonas humanitarias – no se admite ningún actor armado, no se permite el ingreso a ellas de ninguna arma o artefacto de guerra, no se da información a ningún actor armado, no se colabora con ninguno de ellos. Además las familias que hacen parte de las anteriores veredas y que pueden estar en los lugares de paz – zonas humanitarias – se comprometen a la lucha contra la impunidad, a la verdad, la transparencia a acciones comunitarias y organizativas, motivados por una solidaridad campesina entre las veredas y la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó

⁶¹² Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 136.

without allowing the presence of professors'.⁶¹³ Even though an order issued by the Constitutional Court in 2012 supported the community's claims,⁶¹⁴ these humanitarian zones have not yet been officially recognised. The community made a last attempt at putting the proposal on the table in 2014 when its legal representative took part in the fourth delegation of victims to the peace talks in Havana between the government and the FARC guerrillas. The negotiating parties received five delegations of twelve victims, who travelled to Havana to give their testimony and make their proposals about how to deal with victims' rights as part of the peace process. However, the CdPSJA has not heard back from the negotiating parties to date.⁶¹⁵ This example illustrates the fact that the success of the spatial strategies led by peasant communities depends on their ability to build protection on political grounds, using scales and mobilizing networks.

The type of neutrality promoted by the CdPSJA and the ACVC heavily relies on actors and norms at national and international scale, and on the protection networks of which they are a part. While I deal with the main ACVC strategy, namely the establishment of a ZRC, in more detail in the next section, the example of the CdPSJA illustrates how networks, scales, and places converge towards the protection of a territory. The declaration issued by the CdPSJA on the day of its creation states that none of its members should be the target of human rights violations or infringements of International Humanitarian Law.⁶¹⁶ As in the case of the ATCC, cooperation with armed actors is prohibited.⁶¹⁷ But most importantly, it is affirmed that CdPSJA 'will take all relevant and necessary measures to control access or transit of any person without the right to remain or move within the settlements' of the CdPSJA.⁶¹⁸ The community's principles are then closely associated with its territory. Article 6 of the declaration states that the community's settlements will be clearly identified by banners and fences. According to the internal rules of the community, the Internal Council of the CdPSJA is in charge of making sure that armed actors respect the community's settlements. It is also its duty to denounce any violations at national and international scales.⁶¹⁹ The CdPSJA controls its territory through the circulation and diffusion of information on armed actors'

⁶¹³ Constitutional Court. Sentencia T-1025/07. Bogotá. 3 de Diciembre 2007: 23

⁶¹⁴ Constitutional Court. Auto 164/12. Referencia: sentencia T-1025 de 2007. Bogotá. 6 de Julio 2012

⁶¹⁵ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 136.

⁶¹⁶ CdPSJA, 'Declaracion', Article 2.

⁶¹⁷ CdPSJA, 'Declaracion', Article 3.

⁶¹⁸ CdPSJA, 'Declaracion', Article 4.

⁶¹⁹ CdPSJA, 'Reglamento Interno de la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó' (San José de Apartadó, CdPSJA, 23 July 1997) Article 9.

activities. This implies the use of messengers who walk hours, for lack of a phone network, from one hamlet to another in order to inform members of the Internal Council of any violations or combat between armed actors.⁶²⁰ The CdPSJA then publishes the information in a press release and disseminates it through its national and international network support. One of the organic intellectuals of the CdPSJA also frequently informs the Colombian Attorney General's office of any violations. The information thus reaches many different places in the USA and Europe, such as the offices of NGOs like Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch; members of parliament and Foreign Ministry officials in Washington, Brussels, and other European capitals; and embassies in Bogotá. The CdPSJA has been able to develop such networks in the few years following its creation thanks to the support of the Inter Ecclesiastical Commission of Justice and Peace, and to the accompaniment of the NGOs Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR). This points to the other way the CdPSJA tries to protect its territory, namely through the presence of international NGO workers within its settlements. While PBI ensures a frequent but not permanent presence in the main settlement, FOR has a permanent presence in one of the community's hamlet, called La Union. This presence allows these two NGOs to provide international actors such as embassies, foreign offices, or members of parliament with reliable information and ask them to take action to protect the community and its territory. During emergencies, for instance if combat occurs or a member of the community is in danger, these NGOs are not only able to make calls to army commanders at local and national levels, but also to quickly inform embassies in Bogotá, which then put pressure on the Colombian state to act. They also coordinate visits by ambassadors to the community's settlements, or advocacy tours for the CdPSJA's leaders in Washington, DC, and Europe. In 2011, Jesús Emilio Tuberquia went on an advocacy tour in Washington DC. Amongst other people, the leader of the CDPSJA met with representatives from the Inter-American Human Rights Court, and from the office of congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. He was accompanied to these places by members of PBI and FoR, who helped organise the meetings.⁶²¹ The basic aim of these types of meetings is to raise the profile of the CdPSJA and that of its members, so that the US government will put pressure on the Colombian state to protect the CdPSJA and respect its human rights. The CdPSJA then relies on the desire of the Colombian state to improve its image and human rights

⁶²⁰ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 151.

⁶²¹ PBI internal report (Confidential).

record before the international community. The international actors met during these advocacy tours use all this information in their dialogue with the Colombian state, write letters to the Colombian president's office, or even pass resolutions within parliaments. As the CdPSJA gains key positions at the international scale, its territory therefore becomes the central node of a wider protection network connecting many different places at local, national and regional scales, and whose action is oriented towards the protection of community's members and their territory. While these dissuasion strategies have not always been successful, as the massacre in February 2005 of eight community members, including three children, illustrates, they have allowed the CdPSJA to establish a relative control over its territory, stay on its land, and even organise the return of several families to their original settlements.

Finally, both the CdPSJA and the ACVC have managed to challenge the state in its role of duty-bearer of human rights by using legal strategies at national and international scales and gaining key positions within national and international courts. The ATCC is the only one who has not resorted to the international scale in order to obtain justice and seek protection, and this in spite of the total impunity for the several crimes committed against its members. In particular, the ACVC and the CdPSJA have ensured the protection of their members through the Inter-American system. The recourse to actors and mechanisms at international scale has provided them with the recognition of their control over their territory. In the case of the ACVC, in 2000 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures to the ACVC after finding that the Association had been "declared a military objective by regional paramilitary organisations and subject to systematic threats as well as fatal attempts on the lives of its leaders".⁶²² The Corporation for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (REINICIAR) applied for these measures on the ACVC's behalf. In December 1997, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights requested the adoption of precautionary measures on behalf of the members of the CdPSJA considering the killings of 43 members since they had declared neutrality in the armed conflict that same year.⁶²³ In 2000, the president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights requested provisional

⁶²² IACHR, 'Precautionary measures 2000' (Washington, IACHR, 2000). Available at: <http://www.cidh.org/medidas/2000.eng.htm> (25 May 2017); IHCHR, 'Precautionary measures 1999' (Washington, IACHR, 1999). Available at: <http://www.cidh.org/medidas/1999.eng.htm> (25 May 2017).

⁶²³ IACHR, 'Precautionary measures 1997' (Washington, IACHR, 1997). Available at: <http://www.cidh.org/medidas/1997.eng.htm> (25 May 2017).

measures for 189 members of the community. Since then, the Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have recommended that the Colombian state take measures to guarantee adequate protection for the Peace Community. The provisional measures issued by the Inter-American Court were ratified by the Colombian Constitutional Court through the sentence T-1025 in 2007, which establishes that the CdPSJA and the state should agree on the measures by which the community would be protected. The meetings held to agree on these measures are the only spaces in which the CdPSJA now engages in dialogue with the state. However, the state has not followed orders of the Constitutional Courts. Two court orders were issued in 2012, but with few results again. The judge of the Constitutional Court who was in charge of delivering the orders characterised the attitude of the state as omission, both at local and national level.⁶²⁴ She added that the initiative of the CdPSJA ‘sought to draw the attention of the state’ towards regions where its presence is weak. She argued that the CdPSJA and other communities were constructing ‘protection networks’ through the use of International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights International Law, the treaty ratified [by Colombia] as a democracy, and the Constitution’. For her, these protection networks should allow the state to offer ‘clear responses’ in order to protect these communities, which could also be a ‘way to consolidate the presence of the state in forgotten spaces’.⁶²⁵ The second 2012 court order gives a good understanding of the disagreements between the state and the CdPSJA.⁶²⁶ But most importantly, it encourages the state to respect the humanitarian zones already mentioned that the CdPSJA has created. The order states that ‘the recognition that the Peace Community does not refuse nor asks for the withdrawal of public armed forces, but [requests] the respect for the humanitarian zones, open a path towards the revision of the current conditions under which both the fulfilment of the public armed forces constitutional function and the respect of the rules of the humanitarian zones in light of the international humanitarian law and the constitution can be guaranteed in a harmonious manner’.⁶²⁷ Even though the state has fulfilled one of the four demands of the CdPSJA thanks to the Constitutional Court orders, the majority of these orders remain ignored. But they can be used as advocacy tools by the CdPSJA itself, international organisations, embassies, or international courts in order to put pressure on the Colombian

⁶²⁴ CC#1 Judge, María Victoria Calle, 12 June 2014.

⁶²⁵ CC#1.

⁶²⁶ Corte Constitucional, ‘Auto 164/12’. Referencia: sentencia T-1025 de 2007 (Bogotá, Corte Constitucional, 6 de Julio 2012).

⁶²⁷ Corte Constitucional, ‘Auto 164/12’, p. 15.

state. Although the latter has not legally recognised humanitarian zones or the community's principles, in practice the CdPSJA has been able to remain on its territory thanks to this international pressure. As Father Giraldo argued during the court hearing that led to the issuance of the 2012 Constitutional Court order, the measures taken by the state do not aim to fulfil its obligations but to avoid the international community's monitoring and the trial of crimes against humanity.⁶²⁸

While the creation of a Peace Community and humanitarian zones by the CdPSJA was first and foremost a protection strategy, it soon became intermingled with strategies of appropriation. To assert their control over their territory, the CdPSJA and the ACVC have sought to ground their claims in both legal and political grounds, illustrated by the use of different figures which legitimise their claims and their organisations. While, as I have shown, the CdPSJA relies on international norms and owns the land at the same time, the ACVC has used a national legal figure, the ZRC. In addition to these legal strategies, the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC have developed practices to strengthen the link between their members and the territory, leading to what can be termed an organic appropriation of the territory, closely related to memory and the communities' narrative of their resistance. It is to these strategies of appropriation that I now turn.

Appropriation

Appropriation refers here to the strategies employed by peasant communities in order to gain legitimate control over the land and establish an organic connection with their territory. Regarding the former, I have shown in the previous section how the protection strategies used by the CdPSJA can also be characterised as strategies of appropriation. The appeals made by the CdPSJA before the Constitutional Court or the Inter-American system not only aim to protect the community's members but also to assert its control over its territory through legal means. In parallel to these initiatives, the CdPSJA has started to acquire land as a means of appropriating the territory, to resist economic projects promoted by multinational companies aimed at exploiting natural resources, and to implement its own solidary economy. Burnyeat estimates that the community now collectively owns around a thousand hectares.⁶²⁹ Members of the community who own pieces of land also put them at the

⁶²⁸ Corte Constitucional, 'Auto 164/12', p. 12.

⁶²⁹ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 191.

disposition of the community for collective work and production. As I show in the next section, the efforts of the CdPSJA to acquire new land are related to strategies of production and the development of a peasant economy. This connection between strategies of appropriation and production is also quite clear in the case of the ACVC. The ACVC has managed to obtain the legal recognition of its collective rights over the land through the legal norm of the ZRC. According to ACVC members, the objective of the ZRC is the 'strengthening of peasants in the territory'.⁶³⁰ The use of the ZRC was conceived as a means to 'claim the right to land, and the right to live on [the land]',⁶³¹ given that 'the land belongs to peasants'.⁶³² The ZRC is not only meant to guarantee the legal rights of peasants to appropriate the land but also to ensure that their basic needs are fulfilled and they have a 'decent life'⁶³³. In the words of one of the ACVC leaders, it is a 'territorial proposal' offering solutions to peasants' problems, such as 'access to land within the territory, the formalisation of property, development, [and] a peasant subject [granted] with rights'.⁶³⁴ They carry on to explain:

The territorial exercise that we propound (...) is the full satisfaction of peasants' right (...) With this norm it is possible to get access to land, award property rights over plots [of land], it is possible to require the state to ensure a more effective institutional presence.⁶³⁵

For them, the ZRC is a tool to break with land accumulation; with social relations based on domination, clientelism, and paternalism; and to promote an agrarian reform.⁶³⁶ It is not my intention here to go into detail about the potential of the ZRC in this regard.⁶³⁷ My point is that the ZRC is the key element of the ACVC's war of position and the practice that allows the association to appropriate the territory through the mobilisation of networks, the raising of resources, and the establishment of connections between local, regional, and international scales. It has then provided a legal basis to the ACVC's claim to territorial control, as the ZRC

⁶³⁰ ACVC#5, La Cooperativa, 1 May 2014; see also ACVC#13, Puerto Matilde, 2 de Mayo 2014.

⁶³¹ ACVC#11; see also ACVC#10, La Cooperativa, 2 de Mayo 2014

⁶³² ACVC#14.

⁶³³ ACVC#3, Puerto Matilde, 30 de April 2014.

⁶³⁴ ACVC#1.

⁶³⁵ ACVC#1.

⁶³⁶ ACVC#1.

⁶³⁷ On ZRCs, see esp. Chaparro Garcia, W.A. *Las zonas de reserva campesina (ZRC) Reconocimiento del campesino como sujeto politico y cultura en Colombia* (Tesis de grado, Pereira, Universidad Tecnologica de Pereira, 2014); Estrada Alvarez, J. (ed.) *Territorios Campesinos. La experiencia de las Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (Bogotá, Incoder y Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2013); Méndez, Y.A. 'Zona de Reserva Campesina - ZRC, un instrumento de la política de tierras en clave de Reforma Agraria', *Prensa rural*. 13 de enero 2011; Ortiz, C. et al. *Zonas de reserva campesina: aprendizaje e innovación para el desarrollo rural* (Bogotá, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Facultad de Estudios Ambientales y Rurales, Departamento de Desarrollo Rural y Regional, 2004); Reyes Bohorquez, A. 'Las zonas de reserva campesina como figuras para el desarrollo rural colombiano', *Perspectivas Rurales. Nueva época*, 11:22 (2013) pp. 109–120; Sánchez G., D.P. (ed.) *Zonas de Reserva Campesina. Elementos Introductorios y de Debate* (Bogotá, ILSA, 2012).

scope and purpose are defined by a national law, No. 160 of 1994. As such, the law guarantees the collective rights of peasants to manage their own territory, and their individual rights to own the land through the Family Farming Unit. The application decree of the Law 160 states that the objective of the ZRC is to 'promote and stabilise a peasant-based economy, overcome the causes of social conflicts which affect [these zones], and, in general, create the conditions for the achievement of peace and social justice in the respective areas'.⁶³⁸ The ACVC has used the ZRC as an advocacy tool at international scale and gained support of members of parliament and international NGOs.⁶³⁹ The ZRC has allowed the ACVC to raise resources for the development and implementation of economic projects which favour peasants' needs and a peasant-based economy. For instance, international institutions such as the EU or the World Bank have funded some of these projects. Finally, it is part of the cultural appropriation of the territory by peasants. The ACVC has produced a disc entitled '*Short musical stories for historical memory*',⁶⁴⁰ which illustrates this cultural appropriation. The inside cover of the disc states: 'This Project seeks to contribute to the process of remembrance through shorts musical stories.' It is argued that these musical stories, thanks to their 'great testimonial value, bring to the construction of collective memory and the denunciation of serious human rights violations that occur in rural areas'. But the songs also 'provide an account of the vitality of resistance processes and cultural movements within peasant communities'. The author of an article about music and musicians of the Cimitarra River Valley ZRC adds that these musicians convey 'messages of social consciousness, and reflection on their own reality with great critical contents'.⁶⁴¹

This cultural appropriation of the territory is part of the second part of this section, namely the establishment of an organic connection between peasants and the land. It points to the fact that resistance, territory, and autonomy are connected in the peace communities' members' discourse. This is the result of the material relationship that exists between the land on one hand, and the practices and associated discourse of peasants and peace communities aiming at appropriating this very same territory on the other. The president of the ATCC at the time of my visit explained this link between resistance, territory, and

⁶³⁸ El Presidente e la Republica. 'Decreto 1777 de 1996' (Bogotá, Gobierno de la Republica de Colombia, 1996) articulo 1.

⁶³⁹ Tierra, 'La dirigente campesina Irene Ramirez de gira en Alemania'.

⁶⁴⁰ ACVC, 'Relatos Musicales para la Memoria Historica' (Zona de Reserva Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra. ACVC, 2012)

⁶⁴¹ Tierra, 'Músicos y música de la Zona de Reserva Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 1, Junio 2010, p. 16.

autonomy. He even established a link between the territory and the identity of the members of peace communities. He uses an organic metaphor comparing the usual meaning of the territory as a vast area of land, to a conception of the body as one's own territory:

Let's see... Resistance has to be understood as going much further than me staying or refusing to do something that I don't want to do [...] This is related to the very spirituality of a person. And when I talk about spirituality, I think that here is... where there is... also a debate with the Government, when we talk about territory. I think that if you see, look, since the creation [of the world], animals are territorial, we are territorial. This is not only because we live on a territory. This is also for us to understand that this is where one should initiate as well, including the discussion with the State, for then what territory means, and for us what the territory is. Because it is... so difficult, maybe, when there is resistance, to displace people. To displace peasants, to displace negroes, indigenous people, because the territory is part of our life, of our spirituality, and our cosmivision. This is where we grew up, where we have learnt everything, for us the territory is the father and the mother. So this is part of the uprooting, of rooting out the... anybody's entrails. When a person or whoever feels is the meaning, this is what we call resistance. It is resistance to them rooting out our heart. Or rooting out our soul. And this is not done for the sake of doing it, just because I don't want to leave. No, this is just that I cannot conceive this... that this is part of life. And people differ whether they have lived here, or have lived there. So for him, his territory is his body. For instance, one of the exercises we do as association is the integration of other... of other organisations, right. For instance regarding... say, resistance, and when we talk about what resistance means, when we marry and anchor it to a territorial perspective, this is from a spiritual ground. For instance, for women, their territory is the body. If you ask one of the women from the Ruta Pacifica, she says that "for us [women] the first territory is the body". So if you say... the ways I understand resistance, because my body is the whole me. And when there is this sense of belonging, when there is this moral and spiritual identification, this is when one cannot say that resistance do not go further, the fact of me being here, with what belongs to me and what... what I have. And which what is mine only". So when the ensemble of this, say, these persons feel that, it is.. is... is... it is the component of everything. Not only because I work and live here, but also because this is part of the beginning. It is part of my life, of my spirituality.⁶⁴²

This very same conception of the territory is often found from the mouths of the leaders. One of the leaders of the CdPSJA says that, in contrast with the use of the land made by the government,

We see that the peasantry, for this form of historical subsistence, I think that [for] the peasantry the meaning of the land [...], as the indigenous people say, is our mother. This is because I don't think that a peasant without land is a true peasant. He is not a peasant because if he goes to the city, he does not have a cardboard, and he ends up, probably, stealing, eh... He ends up doing many things, he ends up as homeless, because our true form of life as peasants relies on the land. A peasant without land is not a peasant [...] So I think that the meaning of the land for us as a community is the most important thing within the process of our struggle. Because without the land, we could not really move forward with regard to the economy that we want and all the means of subsistence required for every family. Everything starts from there, from the land, where it is possible to cultivate and where it is possible to survive. This is why the struggle of the indigenous people have historically been that very same struggle. The land, because if they don't have any land they cannot survive and struggle.⁶⁴³

This representation of the territory could not be more opposed to the one used by the government, which is based on the extraction of natural resources and the development of monoculture farming to satisfy the requirements of a neoliberal economy aimed at attracting

⁶⁴² ATCC#3.

⁶⁴³ CdP#11.

foreign investors.⁶⁴⁴ For the grassroots members of peasant communities, the meaning assigned to the territory is much more practical. It is related to the production of the means of subsistence and the potential for having a better life, both for the family and the community as a whole. The more spiritual conception of the territory expressed by organic leaders grows out of this material relation and symbolises the existing organic relationship between peasants and the land. The values, norms, and principles promoted by peasant communities, such as life, dignity, labour, neutrality, and non-violence, are all linked to the land in an organic way and contribute to positioning peasant communities within their political, social, and economic environment.

Resisting thus means defending a territory, and this same territory provides the necessary means of subsistence for the development of the community and its members. According to one of my interviewees, 'civil resistance is how we defend our territory'.⁶⁴⁵ It is about defending life within their territory. They added that 'the word "to resist" is a vast, big and significant one' and carried on stressing the relationship between resistance, territory and autonomy by stating that they had already led

...several resistances [...] to prevent displacement, because after the massive displacement that took place in the month between... the months of November and December 2001, we did another civil resistance, and when it... when the peasant centre in the hamlet of La Pedregosa was created, it was with this objective in mind. No to violence but yes to civil resistance. And there we did it several times. We gathered as communities, from different hamlets, from different municipalities, when it was necessary to do it. Because resistance is one of the basic principles linked to the exercise of autonomy within the territory, right to autonomy within the territory. Defense of the territory. This is the fundamental basis. The word "to resist" has as... as objective the defense [of the territory].⁶⁴⁶

The use of the plural to characterise their resistance is interesting in that it conveys the fact that the struggle of peace communities is not a linear process, neither in time nor in space. This process is associated with different moments in time, and different places in space. Many different places fill and define the territory and the resistance associated to it at different times.

This link between memory of the resistance and place is quite striking in all three cases, and leads to an appropriation of the territory through memory-building initiatives. In all three peasant communities under study, memorials in honour of members of the communities who have been killed can be seen spread over their territories. On 27 January

⁶⁴⁴ Presidencia de la Republica, 'Plan nacional de desarrollo 2010-2014, Resumen Ejecutivo' (Bogotá, Gobierno de Colombia, 2010).

⁶⁴⁵ ATCC#9.

⁶⁴⁶ ATCC#9.

2008, 23-year-old Miguel Ángel González Gutiérrez, an active member of Cahucopana and son of Miguel Ángel González Huepa, one of the governing members of the ACVC, was assassinated by the Colombian army. This occurred in the hamlet of La Cooperativa in the Magdalena Medio region (ACVC, 2007: 29). His name appears on the memorial built by the community to remember the names and lives of those who died by the hand of the army and illegal armed groups. Located in the centre of the hamlet, this memorial reminds to the settlers of La Cooperativa of the reasons why they have been resisting and fighting to stay on their land. It places memory at the centre of the peasants' struggle, both geographically and symbolically. Similarly, the CdPSJA frequently organises processions to commemorate symbolic events such as the anniversary of its creation or the massacre of eight of its members in February 2005. I attended one of these commemorations carried out on Easter Sunday. Every year, the community's members walk from the town of Apartadó to the community's main settlement, a good 10 kilometres away. On this road, many peasants were killed or disappeared before and after the creation of the CdPSJA. Father Giraldo usually leads the procession, a religious cross in his hand, stopping at every place where a violation was committed. He told events as they happened and reminded everybody who those killed were. Then, one person within the participants read a passage from the bible, after which everybody carried on walking till the next stop. The procession ended at the main settlement of the CdPSJA, where a mass was celebrated. I attended another, shorter, of these processions in La Union, where peasants walked around the settlement and stopped where peasants had been assassinated. In both cases, peasants left an object in memory of those who had been killed or had disappeared. These initiatives to celebrate and keep alive the memory of victims are then closely linked to the territory. They assign meanings to places and strengthen the feeling of belonging between peasants and their territory. Resettlement to the hamlet of La Resbalosa also illustrates the link between memory and place, and the appropriation, or re-appropriation, of the territory by the CdPSJA. Thanks to these resettlements, the CdPSJA had in 2015 11 settlements.⁶⁴⁷ Another of these settlements, the Alde de Paz Luis Eduardo Guerra, also known as Mulatos-medio, was created in memory of the 2005 massacre five years after it occurred.

⁶⁴⁷ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 187.

The cohesion of peasant communities and their organic relation to the territory and land, although based on material needs, is not spontaneous. Structures change and logically influence the consciousness of peace communities' members. This ultimately has an impact on their appropriation of the territory. Although still very present, violence does not reach the level it used to in the 1980s in the case of the ATCC, and in the 1990s and 2000s in the case of the CdPSJA and the ATCC. Younger generations did not have to go through the atrocities the older generations suffered. State policies based on gaining consent, often through the reward of material compensation, pushed some members to leave their communities. This is why memory and education are so important in ensuring the cohesion of peace communities and the appropriation of their territory as the context changes. In this regard, the ATCC has developed a textbook to be used in all schools within its sphere of influence.⁶⁴⁸ The CdPSJA has written the names of several of its members who were killed or disappeared on stones and has built a memorial around them in the centre of the main settlement. It has also developed its own schools and recruited its own professors in several hamlets. The ACVC frequently delivers workshops about culture, education, human rights, or even the economy, with the help of regional NGOs.

What is striking is that all these strategies of appropriation are also almost always accompanied by strategies of production. This production can be related to meanings, as the processions organised by the CdPSJA and the memorials located within all three communities show. But it is also closely linked to strategies of economic production. The next section deals with these strategies of production.

Production

The strategies of production developed and implemented by peasant communities not only aim to fulfil the needs of peasants, but also to strengthen the tie between peasants and the land. In this regard, they are also strategies of appropriation of the territory through the development of a peasant economy based on a specific mode of production. This search for a new mode of production is based on a use of space according to peasants' social and economic needs. As I have hinted in this chapter, it is also a mode of cooperation which places human dignity and solidarity at its centre. It aims at countering the state-led neoliberal

⁶⁴⁸ ATCC, 'Aprendo y construyo un territorio de paz, Catedra de paz. Ciclo 0-3', (Bogotá, ATCC, 2014).

economic policies and the illegal economic activities promoted by illegal armed groups, which are at the origins of peasants uprooting from the territory. In two of the communities under study, the CdPSJA and the ACVC, this search for a collective mode of production and the development of a peasant-based economy is at the core of their political practices. As many of them told me, the territory is the basis of their 'life plan'. In the case of the ATCC, the association's ability to assert its control over its territory was weakened due to the failure of its strategies of appropriation and production from the beginning of 2000 until today.

The ATCC sought to find a remedy for its lack of social cohesion and control over its territory through strategies of production and the elaboration of a new development plan. But this last plan also failed to generate an organic relationship between the association's members and the territory. In *El orden desarmado*, the authors explain this lack of internal cohesion by the failure of existing leaders to 'develop and consolidate harmonious and supportive internal relationships between leaders of the ATCC, between themselves and the community they represent, and between those who make up the grassroots community'.⁶⁴⁹ The early leaders of the ATCC were 'constitutive elements' of the community, and that explains their ability to forge the internal cohesion of the organisation. Due to this lack of internal cohesion in the 2000s, the authors also argue that

...while the 1988 development plan was designed and elaborated in a direct, free and autonomous manner by the very peasant leaders of the CWPA, in the elaboration of the [2004-2014 plan] the participation of external agents had a decisive and important interference.⁶⁵⁰

In other words, the early leaders were organic intellectuals and the last development plan was not organic enough to be supported at the grassroots level and for community members to take ownership of. By contrast, the economic projects implemented by the ACVC and the CdPSJA have clearly managed to give substance to the organic connection between peasants and the land. The ACVC has implemented several economic projects over the years which have produced clear rewards and benefits for peasants of the Cimitarra River Valley. One of these projects illustrates the success of the ACVC's strategies, combining the mobilisation of resources at the international scale; the local needs of peasants; and a political economy based on solidarity, sustainability, and the respect of natural resources. Started in 2002, the farming and breeding of buffalos has benefited around 46 families and has grown into a

⁶⁴⁹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 489.

⁶⁵⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 495.

community-run business selling milk, meat, or cheese.⁶⁵¹ The ACVC has benefited from the support of the regional Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Program, and has raised funds from the World Bank. It has also managed to get the support of several state entities for the technical training of employees of Ecobufalo Campesino, a company especially created for the commercialisation of buffalo-based products. Such initiatives seek to 'strengthen rural development in zones affected by violence, through the direct association of peasants within the productive chain as partners'. Ultimately, this project fulfils the goal of the ACVC to defend 'peasant territoriality through productive initiatives that ensure the sustainable settlement on the territory, contribute to guarantee food sovereignty and an equilibrium with the environment'⁶⁵². These elements are, according to the ACVC, 'necessary conditions for the achievement of peace with social justice within these territories which have been terribly affected by war'⁶⁵³. In this regard, the ACVC is convinced that the 'political recognition of peasants and the strengthening of a peasant-based economy are the path to reach peace.'⁶⁵⁴ While the ACVC has formulated an extensive development plan with clear strategies of production, the strategies of the CdPSJA are embodied within what Burnyeat terms the 'organic narrative' of the community.⁶⁵⁵ At the centre of this organic narrative lies the production and commercialisation of cocoa, which symbolises the mode of production promoted by the CdPSJA and its relationship with the territory. Burnyeat shows how the production strategies of the CdPSJA are intimately linked to its perception and representation of the state, multinational companies, and its neoliberal policies. This leads to an insistence on food sovereignty and the implementation of production strategies based on autonomy and subsistence. It also leads to the will to produce food in an organic way, in contrast to the methods used by multinational companies and intensive agriculture which use chemicals and pesticides. Such a narrative helps the CdPSJA to establish connections and alliances with economic initiatives based on solidarity at the international scale. In this regard, according to Burnyeat, the trade relationship established with the British-based company Lush contributes to the strengthening of the organic narrative within the CdPSJA, by emphasising concepts of

⁶⁵¹ ACVC, 'Bufalos: de la recria a la comercializacion comunitaria', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 18, Agosto-Noviembre 2014, p. 7.

⁶⁵² ACVC, 'Bufalos'.

⁶⁵³ ACVC, 'Bufalos'.

⁶⁵⁴ ACVC, 'Bufalos'.

⁶⁵⁵ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Politica*, pp. 171-186.

autonomy, the opportunity to get a fairer price, and the preference for alliances at the international scale.⁶⁵⁶

A key element of peasant communities' strategies of production is labour. It is clearly linked to the ability of peasants to appropriate and remain on the land, and to their capacity to legally ground their rights to own the land. When asked what resisting meant for them, some of my interviewees answered that it meant staying on the land. And when asked how they resisted, they answered that they work on the land. Labour symbolises the peasant's view and conception of the land, against the state and market idea of the land as a commodity. Labour (1) occupies a crucial place within the relationship between land and the autonomy of peasant communities, and plays a material role as the means through which members of the community subsist. But labour (2) also has an important place within the discourse of the peasant communities about their right to own the land. Finally, labour (3) has an organisational function in the sense that the peasant communities are organised around the search for an autonomous mode of production which is instrumental to the sustainability and growth of their resistance. Again, we see how strategies of protection, appropriation, and production are intermingled. This is what one of my interviewees termed 'practicing the territory'.⁶⁵⁷

Labour provides the means of subsistence to be able to live in the midst of armed conflict. In this regard, it takes on the form of a 'productive activity of a definite kind, carried on with a definite aim',⁶⁵⁸ as a producer of use-values. Marx, in his analysis of the commodity, identifies labour in the latter sense as a 'condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself'.⁶⁵⁹ Labour understood as such has a universal function in any context. In fact, the extent to which the daily activities of the peasant community's members are focused on subsistence and, as such, do not seem to be related to their resistance, is striking. Picking up cocoa, growing manioc or potatoes, chopping wood, taking care of the cattle – all these activities are part of the daily work of the community. At first sight, none seem to be directly related to the communities' resistance. These everyday tasks are actually crucial for the autonomy and the development of peasant

⁶⁵⁶ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 184.

⁶⁵⁷ ACVC#1.

⁶⁵⁸ Marx, K. *Capital: Critique of Political Economy, vol.1* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) p. 133.

⁶⁵⁹ Marx, K. *Capital*, p. 133.

communities. But they also seem to be directly related to how the communities' members conceive their resistance. They work on the land to affirm their rights to the land. They grow enough crops to be able to feed their families. They harvest enough cocoa to be able to generate income for the community as a whole. In this regard, it is hard to classify these activities within the two categories used by De Certeau to analyse the everyday life of common people in western societies (France in particular), namely strategies and tactics.⁶⁶⁰ Is it because they managed to some extent to isolate the territory of the community from the impact of neoliberal policies and the armed groups' activities? It does not look like what James C. Scott described in his analysis of everyday peasant resistance in Malaysia, either.⁶⁶¹ This resistance was individual and was being carried on without consciousness. For peasant communities in Colombia, it is both collective and conscious.

Within the contexts of armed conflict, being able to grow and produce food is a way of reducing the conditions imposed by the armed actors, be they illegal or legal, on the civil population. For instance, peasants from the three communities mention the troubles caused by food blockades or controls imposed by the army: '(...) here we resist in many different ways. For instance, by having all our cultivated fields and seeding, our food crops. We resist in such a way that in case of blockade we have where to find support.'⁶⁶² Aparicio, in his ethnographic account of the creation of the CdPSJA, recalls the collective working days in which all members of the community participate. One of the oldest men working this day, carrying a huge bag full of maize seeds, looked at him and said: 'This is my weapon against war. There is no time to play or rest, we need to produce our own food'.⁶⁶³ In this regard, labour is directly and materially linked to the community's autonomy,⁶⁶⁴ as a member of the CdPSJA clearly expresses:

The land is the most fundamental thing for any human being. Without land, we would be nobody. Because this is the one we cultivate and the one which gives us our daily food. And this is why, from 2005 onward, we have begun to work heavily toward growing food crops. And this is why this is about looking for new settlements for the community, spaces, sugar cane sowing, good rice supply, and the working groups are being strengthened every day. As we always have in mind the fact that we don't believe in the quality of the legal system, we know that tomorrow, the same excessive events that occurred in 1996 might happen again, that we might go through economic blockades, we need to be able to take us out of this violence on our own territory. And assuming that means working and

⁶⁶⁰ de Certeau, M. *L'invention du quotidien*, p. XLVI.

⁶⁶¹ Scott, J.C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, C.T., Yale University Press, 1985).

⁶⁶² CdP#5.

⁶⁶³ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 250.

⁶⁶⁴ CdP#6, San José de Apartadó, 11 April 2014.

labouring the land, sowing our own production, our own food. And this is why in some of the settlements we have sugar mills and rice mills.⁶⁶⁵

The relationship between autonomy and labour is also reflected in the social relationships that develop around labour:

(...) the autonomy we have is grounded in our everyday practices, the practice of a communal life, in a life based on solidarity, and with regard to the economic aspect, well, this is about work as well, right. The working groups of women, men, eh, working in order to build or rebuild, more specifically, all this social fabric, right, in order to build schools, the house of every family, to get back to work on the fields to be self-sufficient in food, and this will always be complicated (...).⁶⁶⁶

In fact, collective labour is mentioned as one of the most important aspects of what the community represents for its members. In all three communities, collective economic projects have been implemented, alongside the individual plots cultivated for the subsistence of each family.

For instance, the CdPSJA is organised in working groups. Every member of the community is part of one of these working groups. One day a week, usually Thursday, all members of the community leave aside their individual commitments and work for the collective projects of the community. This day is called a communal day. This communal day is one of the elements that holds the CdPSJA together, one that constitutes in a way its backbone. The structure and number of the working groups change over time, between 50 and 100. One of the members of the community's internal council is in charge of coordinating all economic issues and matters.⁶⁶⁷ The importance of the working groups is mentioned by one of the members of the CdPSJA:

The day that I stop fighting will be the end of it all. So this is why the response is collective, and this is why as a community we act in a collective way with the working groups, with the communal work, with all the movement that we do, always in groups, to demand respect, to sometimes save the members of the community when they are detained by any of the armed actors. Eh... to demand and make our presence concrete. So there is no other way to... as a strategy, because one inside of the situation we live in, one cannot resist on its own. Or you would have to conform to the armed actors, but one alone cannot resist.⁶⁶⁸

Labour is also one of the three principles that sustain the resistance of the ATCC. The slogan of the association is 'for the right to life, peace, and work'. Ensuring the right to work is therefore one of the main aims of the association. This objective is clearly stated in the second article of its charter.⁶⁶⁹ This principle is grounded in a particular vision of what peace

⁶⁶⁵ CdP#8.; See also CdP#1.

⁶⁶⁶ CdP#9

⁶⁶⁷ CdP#8.

⁶⁶⁸ CdP#9.

⁶⁶⁹ ATCC, 'Lineas bases'.

means. Peace is not only the absence of violence. Peace would be nothing without economic development. This is how Josué Vargas, the most prominent of the early leaders of the association until he was killed in February 1990, expressed this point of view: 'Peace does not only consist in avoiding deaths: it also requires constant progress and development'.⁶⁷⁰ But this development has to be understood in different terms than those promoted by the capitalist mode of production. Development should not be based on a paternalistic conception that supposes the assistance and aid of the state, but must be grounded on local peasant labour. Before the creation of the ATCC, the structural violence imposed on the peasant population by the armed actors made working the land almost impossible in practice. When they were not deprived of the main productive element to sustain a rural economy based on smallholder farming, peasants could not properly use their own labour to produce enough food crops for their subsistence, due to the violence caused by the presence of armed actors.⁶⁷¹ The testimonies of the peasants of the Carare region are full of stories about displacement, torture, or harassment. Whole families used to leave their homes when armed groups occupied their settlements, and spend several nights in a row gathered in the mountains waiting until the armed actors had gone before returning to their land. The army also caused its own share of violence. All peasants recall the carnetisation. Those who would not renew their ID card were considered members of the guerrillas. But even those who used to go were sometimes kept for hours or days and tortured, until the army decided to release them. These conditions of violence and uncertainty made it very difficult to cultivate and grow their own food crops:

People used to sow very few seeds, and would pick up what they could and was available, nobody could think of planting a shrub of cocoa, or any long-term product, maybe they would plant corn and weed the plantain, but nobody used to make a good home or anything similar because they only thought of leaving; the majority of people was working in wood exploitation, and once they had secured timber, they would leave' (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación & Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011: 328).

The same relationship between labour, land, and resistance is found in the case of the ACVC. Resistance is both associated with labour and land:

The majority of people who live here are poor. But well, we... we survive doing what we know how to do, work, eh... and thus... that is to say the State has attempted many times to get us out of here. It has even killed some of our people... I mean that they have killed family members, they have killed one of my brothers (...). And there are some of us... some of us stayed, around four or five persons who have

⁶⁷⁰ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 326.

⁶⁷¹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 327-330.

been direct victims of the State, which have killed some of our relatives (...). But despite of all, we have not left here. We are not willing to leave our land anymore.⁶⁷²

Resisting therefore means defending the territory⁶⁷³ and the creation of the ZRC specifically aims at that. The objective of the ZRC is to put a hold to the land-grabbing that was pushing thousands of peasants to leave their land and displace, and create conditions which allow peasants to stay on their land:

The idea was that by creating the peasant reserve zone, they would at least respect the position that we have here in the region as peasants. That is to say, they would respect our resources, because if not... If we do not look for alternatives ways of... of how to stop, they will displace us (...). At the same time, it was important to implement several... several... programs or projects inside the one which would benefit us as peasants who are resisting here for the land.⁶⁷⁴

Labour is also attached to the right to land that peasants have developed over the years. The argument is that peasants have a right to own a piece of land insofar as they work and cultivate the land. The argument assumes that the very fact that they work on the land gives them the right to claim ownership of the land. In the case of the ATCC, the widespread and systematic violence imposed on peasants before the creation of the association led to a situation in which tasks related to smallholder and small-scale agriculture could not be carried out anymore, and in which the peasant right to labour was denied.⁶⁷⁵ The subdivision of land, massacres, and scorched earth operations led by the army were the norms before the creation of the ATCC. This right to land claimed by peasants reflects the fact that

The land is the cornerstone of the settler's life project turned into peasant after many years of hard work to transform its environment and turn a jungle area into an adequate area for agriculture. The common denominator of these settlers who have become peasants is a search for dignified life conditions and for a life project that, in its collective dimension, involves the establishment of a smallholder economy in the Carare region.⁶⁷⁶

However, labour not only refers to the production of food or the development of economic projects. It also refers to a certain mode of cooperation between the members of the community, which is associated with the mode of production. This mode of cooperation is also a 'productive force'.⁶⁷⁷ Remembrance of past events and their collective reconstruction by all members of the community, and the creation of alternative modes of

⁶⁷² ACVC#2, Puerto Matilde, 30 April 2014.

⁶⁷³ ACVC#3.

⁶⁷⁴ ACVC#4, Puerto Matilde, 30 April 2014.

⁶⁷⁵ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 327-327.

⁶⁷⁶ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 328.

⁶⁷⁷ Marx, K., Engels, F. *The German Ideology: Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy*, (London, Lawrence & Wishart Limited, 1970) p. 50.

teaching or educating the children growing up within the community, can be considered as part of this mode of cooperation and as another strategy for the appropriation of territory.

The fact that strategies of production and strategies of protection are sometimes intermingled is well illustrated by a novel form of collaboration between a British cosmetic firm, PBI, and the CdPSJA. In March 2014, the UK-based Lush, which buys cocoa produced by the CdPSJA, campaigned in favour of the latter's struggle for peace and human rights as part of its Peace Pioneers Campaign. Lush is the main buyer of the Community's cocoa, which it ships to Europe to be processed into cocoa butter and powder. The first 25 tonne shipment of cocoa beans left the CdPSJA in 2010. Lush supported the community's application to become certified Fair Trade and Organic producers.⁶⁷⁸ With this campaign, Lush hopes through collaborating with PBI and sharing the experiences of the CdPSJA members that it can help to spread their inspirational message of peace.⁶⁷⁹ From 10 to 16 March 2014 in the UK and Europe, and from 17 to 23 March in the USA and Canada, Lush shops campaigned to protect the CdPSJA and to support the work of PBI as well. Vigils were organised in support of the Peace Community and honouring the community members who have lost their lives. Two members of the CdPSJA travelled from Colombia to London and Manchester and took part in activities organised in Lush's shops, where they spoke to staff and customers about the Peace Community, answering questions about their struggle. They also joined film screenings about the CdPSJA and interacted with the audience afterwards. They spoke at University College London, and met with journalists, human rights groups, and lawyers. Alongside actions targeting civil society and aiming at raising awareness around the situation of the CdPSJA, activities targeting political society were also scheduled. A special reception was organised at the House of Lords in London, chaired by Lord Joel Joffe, PBI patron, where Simon Constantine, responsible for buying and sourcing the raw materials used to make Lush's ethical products, addressed the Colombian Ambassador and the Foreign Office. The chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee also spoke, as well as the head of the South America desk of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.⁶⁸⁰ The aim of this campaign was to push the Colombian government to implement the Colombian Constitutional Court Order 164 of July

⁶⁷⁸ Lush, 'Featured Peace Pioneers'. Available at: <https://uk.lush.com/article/peace-pioneers> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁶⁷⁹ Lush, 'Featured Peace Pioneers'.

⁶⁸⁰ PBI UK, 'Peace Pioneers'. Available at: <http://www.peacebrigades.org.uk/country-groups/pbi-uk/peace-pioneers/> (Accessed 30 March 2015).

2012. In this collaboration between Lush and the CdPSJA, strategies of protection, appropriation, and production meet.

In this regard, the CdPSJA's practices represent a fascinating attempt at isolating and protecting its members, not only from armed conflict but also from the violence induced by the economic system and neoliberal policies of the Colombian government, through the use of a mode of production combining scales and using pre-existing economic and political networks. But it could also be considered a compromise within the capitalist system. Asked whether trading with Lush was a way to contribute to the working of the capitalist system, and as such contradictory with the community's ideals, one of the leaders had the following answer:

The trade we have got is the best you can get within the system. This is why I say that it is very difficult to fight against the system, because you cannot escape and that for this reason things will not change because no... The power of the system to impose is so strong, right, but, at least, one of the trading companies like the English one, well, I believe that this is a fairer way to do business. To pay a better price and to do business without human rights violations. And reversing a lot of the earnings to producers. So I think that it socially makes sense and for us it has in fact been an experience through which we have managed within all the... our quest. So there are a lot of opportunities for that. But we still do not agree, because it should not be like that. No? But as I said, as it is not possible to entirely escape from the system, well, it is necessary to get into certain things. And this is one of them, having to export I mean.⁶⁸¹

This quotation points towards the potential for the transformation of peasant communities' strategies, not only of production but also of appropriation and protection, and towards the development of social, political, and economic alternatives as well. This development of alternatives through the making of alternative historical blocs will be the subject of the next chapter.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this chapter that the control achieved over their territory through the spatial strategies of war of position analysed herein allows peasant communities to build social and collective bonds, to develop organisational and productive processes, and to protect their members. Their ability to control their territory, both in representational and material ways, determines their place within society. The possibility to see their human rights discourse materialise depends on their ability to protect, appropriate, and produce on the territory. This link between the protection, appropriation, and production of a territory on

⁶⁸¹ CdP#9.

one hand, and peasants' rights on the other is key in the sense that the latter would not have any meaningful content if peasants could not control their territory. This ability to control their territory is also key to their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding at local and national scales, as the social, political, and economic alternatives they develop are all grounded in the territory. The current government seems to have understood that, as it now promotes the concept of a territorial peace (*paz territorial*) which places rural communities at the centre of the implementation of the peace agreement with FARC. I come back in more detail to this concept and its relations to the alternatives models developed by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC in Chapter 5.

However, for the young Gramsci, control over space is not enough to overcome capitalist relations of production and achieve social and political change. In an article published in 1920 entitled 'Seize power or seize the factory? – Bordiga',⁶⁸² Gramsci takes the example of the working-class disturbances in Liguria as a symptom of a new level of consciousness among the working masses. The workers seized the factory and took over their plants instead of going on strike. But this is not enough to overcome capitalism. Gramsci argues that 'the factory will be conquered by the working class [...] only after the working class as a whole has seized political power'⁶⁸³. Otherwise, their initiatives would be crushed by the coercive apparatus of the State. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, workers' initiatives have to be 'channelled, merged and organized into one great, comprehensive upsurge aimed directly at the heart of the enemy bourgeoisie'. For Gramsci, the control over the coercive apparatus of the state is 'the only more or less direct route to the take-over of the factory'⁶⁸⁴. This reminds us that for Gramsci, the exercise of power relies both on consent and on coercion, and that coercion logically precedes consent in that there can be no power or hegemony that does not ultimately rely on coercion. This raises issues as to the relevance of Gramsci's understanding of power for the analysis of peasant communities' non-violent initiatives. While non-violent in nature, these initiatives must rely to a certain extent on some degree of coercion to be successful.

I have shown in Chapter 2 that peasant communities have had a positive impact on the direct violence they faced. This chapter explored their role in building peace and

⁶⁸² Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, pp. 235-236.

⁶⁸³ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, pp. 235-236.

⁶⁸⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, pp. 235-236.

challenging structural violence through control over space. This is why a spatial perspective on Gramsci's understanding of power proves useful, as it points to the social basis of power and articulates both its material and ideational aspects. Theories of non-violence might be able to explain how non-violent strategies contribute to the taking or overthrow of political power, but a spatial perspective on Gramsci's understanding of power goes further. It tells us that it is not sufficient to withdraw consent in order to bring about social and political change. It is also necessary to establish some kind of control over space, and to rely on coercion and exercise a decisive function within the economic structure. It is also crucial to ensure the coherency of structure and superstructures through the formation of an alternative historical bloc promoting concrete alternatives. While the ability to develop a new consciousness and refuse the conceptions of the world imposed on them by the state, the armed actors, and ultimately neoliberalism was a first step towards their autonomy and emancipation, their ability to assert their control over a territory and produce a space that conforms to their social relations of productions constitutes the decisive step towards the achievement of their autonomy. The next step consists of the formulation of coherent alternatives for the transformation of social, political, and economic relations and shows their relevance for peacebuilding at the national level. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The making of alternative historical blocs: Peasant communities, political power, and social change

Introduction

The front-page headline of *Tierra*, a newspaper run by the Prensa Rural news agency which is led by the ACVC, makes it clear: *¡La lucha campesina es la lucha por la paz!* (the peasant struggle is the struggle for peace). The main body of the article goes on to argue, in a strikingly Gramscian vein, that

...the peasant movement is rising in the whole country in defence of its rights. The national list of demands (pliego nacional de peticiones) that we introduce in this edition of *Tierra*, capture the most important claims made by the agricultural sector right now. But this has not only to do with the corporate demands of the peasantry: its solution is intimately linked to the peace building needed for the Colombian people'.⁶⁸⁵

This chapter analyses the efforts of the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC to develop alternatives to the traditional dominant historical bloc in Colombia, constituted by urban and industrial elites, rural landowners, and political parties. After contributing to the emergence of a new conception of the world, or critical consciousness, and establishing a control over their territories through a war of position, the making of political, social, and economic alternatives of a 'national-popular' character – thus establishing a link between the popular aspirations of peasants and the national issue that peace is – is the last aspect of the struggle led by peasant communities I analyse in relation to their contribution to peacebuilding. At first, peasant communities aimed at putting an end to immediate violence and at addressing the needs and problems they faced in their everyday lives. As peasant communities grew, their objectives and demands became more ambitious so as to broaden the economic-corporate goals, in Gramscian terms, that characterised their birth. They have developed broader narratives which place the experience of peasant communities at the centre of an eventual peace settlement, not only within their local settings but also at the national level. As I have shown in Chapter 2, the initiatives of peasant communities are based on a human rights discourse and the principles of neutrality and non-violence on one hand, and a critique of the political economy of the Colombian armed conflict on the other. These two elements revealed a particular conception of the world, breaking away from the traditional world views

⁶⁸⁵ *Tierra*, '¡La lucha campesina es la lucha por la paz!', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 14, Junio-Agosto 2013, p. 2.

imposed by political parties and armed actors alike in Colombia. However, as I have argued in Chapter 3, each of the three communities under study eventually developed their very own alternative spatial and political projects based on an organic relationship to the land. The extent to which peasant communities gain command over their land determines their ability and capacity to bring about change within their local settings and challenge the armed actors. Building on the last two chapters, I look here at the efforts made by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC to make alternative historical blocs that build on these territorial and political projects and conceptions of the world.

To analyse these efforts, I use Gramsci's concepts of the historical bloc and the 'national-popular'. For Gramsci, if a counter-hegemonic or anti-passive revolution struggle is to be successful, the challenge of social structures must be accompanied by the formation of alternative hegemonic blocs supported by political projects and social alliances of a 'national-popular' character. This is because 'the capturing of space is linked to the physical construction of a hegemonic bloc which can forge together a unity, while also maintaining a clear direction'.⁶⁸⁶ Coalitions and alliances have to emerge and be directed towards the contestation and challenge of the very common sense that the traditional historical bloc rests upon. This is also to recognise that the development of alternative hegemonic movements by peasant communities has to contribute to the emergence of a new common sense able to both challenge civil war dynamics (Chapter 2), and represent a credible alternative to the traditional dominant ideas that would spread throughout both civil and political society. As Worth puts it, such a common sense should be 'distinctive enough to challenge all facets of everyday life', which can only be done through 'an alternative or counter-hegemonic project that would have not just a firm ideological direction, but would need to be combined with a series of what Gramsci termed "national-popular" incentives". Worth adds that these national-popular incentives 'would be formulated through a strong network and a balance of traditional and organic intellectuals'.⁶⁸⁷ The concepts of the historical bloc and the national popular help me determine the cohesion, strength, and potential of peasant communities' contest of the dominant structures and actors that fuel the conflict in Colombia. These concepts also help me assess whether the new common sense promoted by peasant

⁶⁸⁶ Joseph, J. *Hegemony*, p. 181.

⁶⁸⁷ Worth, O. *Resistance in the Age of Austerity: Nationalism, the Failure of the Left and the Return of God* (London and New York, Zed Books, 2013), p. 36.

communities has the potential to be the basis of an alternative historical bloc that would constitute the bedrock of peacebuilding in Colombia.

The structure of this chapter runs as follows. I start by introducing the concepts of historical bloc and the national-popular and explaining their relevance for the analysis of peasant communities' attempts at developing alternatives. In the next section I develop a close analysis of each of the three peasant communities' attempts to build such alternatives. I use Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc to draw attention to peasant communities' attempts to elaborate alternative political projects, articulate interests, and construct alliances with other social actors. In other words, peasant communities seek to forge a unity between many different actors in order to build credible counter-hegemonic movements opposed to the state and neoliberal economic policies. I also look at these initiatives through Gramsci's concept of the national-popular, examining peasant communities' claims to contribute to peacebuilding at national level thanks to the mobilisation of organic intellectuals. Finally, I analyse the intellectual and moral dimensions of peasant communities' initiatives to build alternatives. I show that dignity appears as the common material and ideational basis of the alternative historical blocs led by the three peasant communities in their attempts to build a sustainable peace in Colombia. In this regard, I also pay attention to their economic projects considered as the reflect of this intellectual and moral reform, and placing dignity at their core.

My argument runs as follows. I contend that each of the communities under study illustrates a different model of social transformation, from the self-autonomy of the CdPSJA rejecting both the state and capitalism, to the confrontational, power-seeking strategies of the ACVC, and the liberal stance of the ATCC seeking to bring the state back in. While dignity appears to be the common ground of all these initiatives, the three peasant communities under study have adopted different attitudes and strategies towards the state and capitalism in their efforts to resist and build alternatives, which result in the emergence of different alternative blocs. My claim is that these different attitudes, strategies, and historical blocs have implications regarding their potential to bring about social change.

The 'national popular', the historical bloc, and peasant communities

The discourses of all three peasant communities under study establish links between the popular aspirations of peasants and the national issue that peace is. To look in more detail at the significance of this link between peasant initiatives and peacebuilding, and to shed light on its relevance for the making of alternative historical blocs and the role of intellectuals, I first explain the relevance of Gramsci's concept of the national-popular and the historical bloc for the analysis of the contribution to peacebuilding by peasant communities. Peace processes and the struggles that are an integral part of their dynamics can be considered as attempts to constitute new and alternative historical blocs (Chapter 1). Through a war of position and the work of organic intellectuals, a given social group gains the capacity to shape the institutions that dominate political and civil society, and form a historical bloc which ensures the cohesion of the social whole. To be able to challenge the hegemonic historical bloc, the making of alternative historical blocs is therefore necessary. In the Colombian context, the war system⁶⁸⁸ is maintained by a dominant historical bloc formed by political elites and parties at local and national levels, urban industrial capital, and rural landowners, using a mix of coercion – i.e., the army and paramilitary groups, or social, economic, and political relations based on domination – and consent – i.e., the diffusion of an anti-Communist ideology and the implementation of strategies of co-optation. Such a historical bloc is key to the reproduction of the hegemony of a given social group. Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc is at the heart of his theory of hegemony. Through the use of this concept, Gramsci seeks to explain the links between base and superstructure, between changes in the economy on one hand, and politics, ideology, and law on the other. The concept of historical bloc points to the fact that in order to bring about social and political change, be it progressive or conservative, or maintain the *status quo*, it is necessary to ensure coherence between the economy or the economic structure on the one hand, and the political, legal, and ideological superstructures on the other. As a result, it is not enough to gain a dominant position within the economy. Power also has to be maintained or challenged within civil society at the level of superstructures, through the building of political alliances, the diffusion of ideas and ideologies, and the shaping of social institutions. Through the concept of the historical bloc, Gramsci connects all the ensemble of social relations and

⁶⁸⁸ Richani, N. *Systems of Violence*.

stresses the connection between changes at the individual level (human being), at the social level (between human beings or social groups), and at the structural level (between social relations, i.e., the economy, politics, and ideology). This is clear when he refers to the concept of the historical bloc as 'a circle joining the levels of the superstructure' and the 'unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), unity of opposites and of distincts'.⁶⁸⁹ This also points to the fact that social and political change, or peace in a positive sense as far as this thesis is concerned, cannot be achieved by operating changes within the structures or superstructures only, as the liberal peace of the 1990s advocated and the statebuilding paradigm of the 2000s theorised.⁶⁹⁰ Peacebuilding entails socio-economic, cultural, and political projects combined in order to bring about progressive peace. It cannot be left to the economy alone, neither to the state nor local actors, for that matter.

Any account of the attempts by peasant communities to form an alternative historical bloc must pay attention to the way they base their struggle on practices that aim to transform the economy and forge a new common sense of a national-popular character. To challenge dominant power relations within civil and political society, a social group not only has to create the political, cultural, and ideological conditions that will allow it to become dominant, but also create the economic conditions that will guarantee its survival, reproduction, and eventually hegemonic position within society, if it manages to overcome the dominant historical bloc. Hegemony is not only ethico-political, but material as well; historical blocs are built on material and economic foundations and maintained through both consent and coercion. Neither is hegemony only conjunctural. It is the exercise of power based on a dominant position within the economy and political society (the means of exploitation and coercion) backed by an ideology, or common sense, and shaping civil society's institutions (consent). In this regard, the identification of alternative historical blocs has to stress the institutional, ideational, spatial, and economic processes combining to build and shape this very same historical bloc.

Therefore, a historical bloc that has achieved a hegemonic position is more than a political alliance between different social forces and the articulation of their interests. According to Gramsci, such an alliance would merely end up in reformism as it would only be

⁶⁸⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 137.

⁶⁹⁰ Paris, R. *At War's End*.

concerned with ‘partial questions’.⁶⁹¹ Gramsci insists on the importance of overcoming corporate particularisms and forging unity and homogeneity within a party by focusing on the big questions. This emphasis on ‘fundamental questions’ corresponds to the ‘decisive moments’ when unity will be achieved. For Gramsci, such unity and ‘global character’ does not happen ‘all at once, but only gradually through experience’. It involves challenging common sense and the conditions that sustain it, and creating ‘the necessary preconditions’ for the emergence of alternative historical movements and blocs.⁶⁹² In addition to the need for unity and homogeneity,⁶⁹³ Gramsci stresses the necessity to develop concrete historical ideologies – the form of historical blocs – reflecting material forces, and the need to build material forces – the content of historical bloc – to support ideologies. Indeed, in the concept of historical bloc,

...material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces.⁶⁹⁴

In this regard, the concept of the national-popular appears closely related to the concept of the historical bloc. As the editor of the *Prison Notebooks* put it, this notion

...is perhaps best taken as describing a sort of ‘historic bloc’ between national and popular aspirations in the formation of which the intellectuals, in the wide, Gramscian use of the term play an essential mediating role. It is important to stress, however, that it is a cultural concept, relating to the position of the masses within the culture of the nation, and radically alien to any form of populism or ‘national-socialism’.⁶⁹⁵

In other words, the national-popular, as does the historical bloc, forms the basis on which a new state can be founded and grow. Munck points to that when he says that ‘It is part of a nation-building process (...) it is about generating a new common sense, or alternative conception of the world, through the development of existing currents within the culture of the popular classes, even if these are deemed primitive by “high culture”’.⁶⁹⁶ In this chapter, I look at how peasant communities try to bring about change and peace at national level by linking their popular aspirations to the national issue that peace is. This is a highly cultural endeavour which implies confronting the stigmatisation of peasants and bridging the rural-urban divide. I show the importance of this cultural dimension in my analysis of peasant

⁶⁹¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 157.

⁶⁹² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 157-158.

⁶⁹³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 204-205.

⁶⁹⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 377.

⁶⁹⁵ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 421.

⁶⁹⁶ Munck, R. *Rethinking Latin America*, p. 76.

communities' attempts at making alliances with other social groups and forging a new common sense.

To better grasp the significance of the national-popular, it is useful to refer to Gramsci's brief notes on Machiavelli's politics.⁶⁹⁷ In these notes, Gramsci enquires into the conditions for awakening and developing a national-popular collective will, and analyses the failure of the Italian state formation, i.e., 'the failures of the successive attempts to create a national-popular collective will'.⁶⁹⁸ Gramsci then proceeds to an analysis of class struggle in Italy. Regarding the negative and conservative forces, he stresses the role of conservative social groups, in particular the landed aristocracy and the Church, whose influence led to an 'economic-corporate' situation. He also points to the lack of an effective Jacobin force, in reference to the French revolutionary movement which led to the 1789 revolution, that would be able to awaken a national-popular collective will. Regarding the positive forces, he argues that the possibility of seeing a national-popular collective will is to be sought in the existence of 'urban social groups which have attained an adequate development in the field of industrial production and a certain level of historico-political culture'. But in a statement that strikingly echoes the Colombian situation, Gramsci also makes it clear that 'any formation of a national-popular collective will is impossible, unless the great mass of peasant farmers bursts simultaneously into political life'.⁶⁹⁹ The concept of the national-popular is therefore useful to analyse the direction that the alliances formed by the three peasant communities under study might take and their strategic relevance for bringing about peace at the national level.

Finally, for Gramsci, the formation of a national-popular collective will goes hand in hand with the organisation of a moral and intellectual reform, i.e., 'to the question of religion or world-view'.⁷⁰⁰ Gramsci ascribes these two tasks to the political party when he says: 'The modern Prince must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a superior, total form of modern civilisation'.⁷⁰¹ He carries on to say: 'These two basic points – the formation of a national-

⁶⁹⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 125-133.

⁶⁹⁸ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 131.

⁶⁹⁹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 132-133.

⁷⁰⁰ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 132.

⁷⁰¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, pp. 132-133.

popular collective will, of which the modern Prince is at one and the same time the organiser and the active, operative expression; and intellectual and moral reform – should structure the entire work'.⁷⁰² In this regard, Peasant communities could be conceived as the modern prince that Gramsci envisaged – if only in the countryside – binding the popular and everyday culture of peasants and forging a new common sense within a national-popular lens that would be able to reach out to other social minorities and urban populations as well. To conclude, Gramsci stresses the fact that the creation of a national-popular collective will and the promotion of an intellectual and moral reform must also be accompanied by changes within the economic structure, as 'the programme of economic reform is precisely the concrete form in which every intellectual and moral reform presents itself'.⁷⁰³ Following this line, I argue that the economic projects promoted by peasant communities represent a reflection of the values they deem necessary in order to build a stable and lasting peace in Colombia, based on human dignity.

The Making of Alternative Historical Blocs

The peacebuilding efforts and initiatives of peasant communities were the product of the interaction with many other groups resisting armed conflict, the state, and neoliberalism, not only in Colombia but on an international scale as well (Chapters 2 and 3). As a result, the development of these initiatives cannot be separated from attempts to articulate interests and build social alliances with these other groups, such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. These interactions led to the emergence of a collective analysis of the political context and the same conception of the territory, and encouraged the search for alternative models of society and strategies to challenge the state. In this section, I also analyse the role of intellectuals, both organic and traditional, which was key not only for ensuring leadership and cohesion but for the development of a narrative highlighting the relevance of peasants' initiatives for peacebuilding at the national level. Finally, I found that while the political, economic, and cultural interests of these groups might diverge, the notion of dignity is the common ground on which these alliances were built.

⁷⁰² Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 133.

⁷⁰³ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 133.

All three peasant communities under study have tried to reach out to other social groups, organisations, and communities in order to strengthen their initiatives and build alliances. My contention in this section is that the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ACVC have developed different models of social transformation, each of which corresponds to a different idea of how to challenge state power and bring about peace. These models become apparent when looking at their efforts to build alliances and coalitions with other social groups. The CdPSJA has presented itself as a proof that another way of life and another system are possible. It has focused on strengthening its self-autonomy in the midst of armed conflict and outside the reach of the state, and has favoured alliances at the international rather than at the national scale in order to challenge state power. Recognising the state as the legitimate national overarching authority and the army as its legal coercive branch, the ATCC has always committed to collaborate with state entities in order to consolidate its organisation and promote economic and social development in the region. Finally, the ACVC has based its actions on a concept of popular power and, sought the unification of peasant, ethnic, Afro-Colombian groups and other subaltern social sectors of society. It has tried to directly challenge state power through a combination of a war of position and war of manoeuvre. As I show, the ACVC is closest to a Gramscian understanding of counter-hegemony.

The ATCC

The ATCC emerged as an association in the 1980s, at a time when opportunities for international support, human rights discourse, and information technology were not as important, or did not even exist. This, in itself, might explain why the situation faced by the peasants of the Carare region and their initiative did not have the same visibility in the 1980s that the CdPSJA and the ACVC achieved at the end of the 1990s and even more so in the 2000s. The ATCC could not benefit from the infrastructure of the global economy that emerged with globalisation, especially the new information and communication technologies. Neither has it been enabled to become part of global politics facilitated by what Sassen calls the 'possibility of global imaginaries', whereby local actors 'become subjects of adjudication in human rights decisions, human rights and environmental activists, and many others are increasingly becoming actors in global politics'.⁷⁰⁴ While this makes the ATCC's initial

⁷⁰⁴ Sassen, S. 'Local Actors in Global Politics', *Current Sociology*, 52:4 (1998) p. 649.

achievements even more remarkable, including the agreements made with illegal armed actors and the award of the Right Livelihood Award in Stockholm in 1990, it does not explain their relative failure to build strong alliances with other social actors, become a long-lasting mobilising force, and spread their 'local rationality' and 'militant particularism'.⁷⁰⁵ The ATCC's organic leaders did not manage to create the necessary conditions for the emergence and reproduction of a strong alternative bloc. On one hand, the lack of a strong critical consciousness, the form of historical blocs, that would have allowed the ATCC to go beyond the mere reduction of violence, prevented the association from becoming a counter-hegemonic force with national-popular incentives. On the other hand, its inability to forge strong social alliances, shape the content of historical blocs, and overcome corporate particularisms did not provide the necessary material basis for the development of such critical consciousness. As a result, the ATCC's organic leaders could not bind together the social, institutional, ideational, spatial, and economic dimensions of the association's struggle.

The ATCC was at its strongest as a regional actor at the end of the 1980s; it represented a strong social force in 1987. Its potential to become a hegemonic force and its capacity to gather peasants were real. But it also aimed to reactivate the economy in the whole region and guarantee peace through the implementation of development projects. It was developed with the support of two state entities, the National Rehabilitation Plan (PNR) and the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA).⁷⁰⁶ The aim of the plan was to 'contribute to the [formation of the] state through the identification of regional issues so that with the help of [the state's] resources, we, as inhabitants of this martyred region, can guarantee peace and contribute to the production of food'.⁷⁰⁷ The plan came up with several projects related to health, education, housing, infrastructures, and the production and marketing of crops in response to the needs of the region. Interestingly, it also sought the support of state entities for the funding and implementation of these projects, for example, the army to take charge of the construction of roads and other entities to provide engineers, training, or material.

⁷⁰⁵ Cox, L. and Gunvald Nilsen, A. *We make our own history* (London, Pluto Press, 2014), pp. 73-78.

⁷⁰⁶ At the time, the PNR was the state entity in charge of ensuring the presence of the state in marginal regions of the country through the funding of economic and infrastructure projects. INCORA's mission was to promote access to rural property, ensure its democratic distribution, and support peasant economies.

⁷⁰⁷ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo de la localidad de La India', 6 January 1988. Caja 22 Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 2 c.22.

Back in 1987, the year of its creation as an association, the ATCC was one of a kind. By 1990, it was seen by other peasant organisations in the region as a model they could follow. After two years of existence, the ATCC was no longer only trying to stop violence; it began to address the root causes of the violence. In this regard, the ATCC attempted to obtain the support of state institutions, such as INCORA, for its development plans. It also tried to build links with other peasant communities in the Carare region. The ATCC looked as if it could be a binding force that would attract other small peasant organisations in the Carare region, the Opón region, and the district of Velez. The ATCC even claimed to be a 'national workshop for peace'⁷⁰⁸. As a result, in 1988, peasants from the townships of El Carmen and San Vicente del Chucurri showed an interest in the association, and the ATCC got in touch with other organisations in the context of the Third Peasant Forum of the Carare-Opón region. The outcomes of this forum, which took place between the 14th and 17th of December 1988, were the elaboration of a peace plan on one hand –which I will come back to – and the creation of the Federation of Peasant Organisations of the Carare Opón (FOCO) on the other.⁷⁰⁹ The latter was conceived of as a

...platform dedicated to the struggle for peasant demands from this part of the country, struggle which will at all times be pacifist, democratic, participative and critical, acting and permanent and always respectful of all human rights.⁷¹⁰

FOCO was meant to gather peasant organisations based in the Carare region, whose aim was to fight for 'a true integral agrarian reform that would solve land-related issues and the social problem'.⁷¹¹ Its objective was to coordinate all the organisations, implement programmes for the region as a whole, help fulfil the proposals that came out of the 3rd Forum, and act as spokesperson of all peasant organisations in the region.⁷¹² The fact that the ATCC was at the time the more ambitious social actor in the region is illustrated by the programmes developed by other organisations present at the Forum. The ATCC was indeed the only organisation trying to build peace and formulate demands that went beyond the economic-corporate aspect of peasants' struggle. All other organisations had developed programmes of an economic-corporate kind only, focusing on the commercialisation of coffee, cocoa, and other

⁷⁰⁸ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo de la localidad de La India', 6 January 1988. Caja 22 Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 2 c.22.

⁷⁰⁹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 161-162.

⁷¹⁰ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón' Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, p.11. Author's translation: Plataforma de lucha para la reivindicación campesina de este sector del país, lucha que en todo momento será pacífica, democrática, participativa y crítica, actuante y permanente y respetuosa siempre de todos los derechos humanos

⁷¹¹ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón'. Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, p.3

⁷¹² Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón'. Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, p.17

food crops; on the improvement of infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods; and on the need for more investment and capital.⁷¹³ This partly explains why FOCO did not manage to overcome its corporate particularisms. It only focused on ‘partial questions’ rather than the big questions to achieve unity and homogeneity.⁷¹⁴

Similarly, the Gran foro para la Paz de Cimitarra, organised by the ATCC on 15/16 of January 1990, represented the opportunity for the ATCC to both update its initial narrative and discourse, and strengthen its social base in order to face illegal armed actors.⁷¹⁵ The ATCC decided to invite ‘all living forces who exert an influence in the region and governmental high dignitaries at the departmental and national levels’,⁷¹⁶ including FARC and paramilitary groups. The aim of the meeting was to ‘dialogue in an open way in order to design strategies to guarantee peace and progress in the region’.⁷¹⁷ In this regard, one of the roundtables during the two-day meeting dealt with issues related to community organisation. Its conclusions made clear that

[...] there [was] the need to legally organise rural and urban communities so that they can start authentic and viable development processes which strengthen peace and adequately structure production, the market, the appropriation of technologies, political participation, etc...⁷¹⁸

These conclusions also recommended that the ATCC present itself as a model in the region that other organisations could follow. As a result, the ATCC should promote ‘the creation of *empresas asociativas*’ within its sectors of influence⁷¹⁹.

However, these events and forums never led to more cooperation between peasant organisations of the Carare region, in the form of concrete political or economic projects. In fact, in 1988, the associations that took part in the Third Peasant Forum of the Carare-Opón Region already bemoaned this situation:

Up to now relationships [between organisations] have been scarce; it is possible to say that peasant organisations of the Carare-Opón have been working in isolation and have not developed common tasks even though there have not been obstacles amongst themselves either. There is almost no communication and they have only met in order to participate in the peasant forums. All communities would benefit from a process of integration which would enable them to work hands in hands.⁷²⁰

⁷¹³ Archivo ATCC, Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón. Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1: p.7-10

⁷¹⁴ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 157.

⁷¹⁵ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, ‘El orden desarmado’, p. 377.

⁷¹⁶ Archivo ATCC, Carta de invitación al Gran Dialogo para la Paz en Cimitarra. 8 de Diciembre 1989. Caja 21 Memorias de eventos/Carpeta 3 c.21: 6

⁷¹⁷ Archivo ATCC, Convocatoria al Gran Dialogo para la Paz en Cimitarra. 8 December 1989. Caja 21 Memorias de eventos/Carpeta 3 c.21: 6

⁷¹⁸ Archivo ATCC, Report of the Gran Dialogo para la Paz en Cimitarra.15-16 January 1990. Caja 21 Memorias de eventos/Carpeta 3 c.21: 45

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⁷²⁰ Archivo ATCC, Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón. Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1: p.10: 24

There had been some collaboration between some of the organisations participating in the Forum, in particular between the ATCC, ASONACIS, and AGROBEDAS, but the lack of cooperation and communication was still striking.⁷²¹ Despite this, participants acknowledged that the problems they were facing were not isolated. They were conscious that regional issues could only find a solution through the participation of all communities that received support from the state at the time.⁷²²

Just when the ATCC seemed to be in a position to become this regional binding actor and overcome corporate particularisms, thus further challenging the influence and power of local elites and illegal groups, and gain the support of several state institutions, its leaders were assassinated in Cimitarra on 26 February 1990. Years of internal divisions and weakening of its social basis followed. At the time of writing, the ATCC is no longer, nor has it been for a long time, the binding actor it used to be. Although it is active in several networks – such as the Network of Initiatives and Communities for Peace from the Grassroots Level (Red de iniciativas y comunidades de paz desde la base), funded and steered by the Swiss cooperation agency – and is the target of a Collective Reparation Plan in collaboration with the state, the ATCC lacks the internal cohesion and unity to be able to build a strong alternative historical bloc. It did manage to attract the support of NGOs at the beginning of the 2000s, such as the Magdalena Medio Development and Peace Program (MMDP), the UNDP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Project Counselling Service (PCS), or the Red Cross, but this support was technical rather than a political alliance.⁷²³ The ATCC has also been unable to develop a strong alternative common sense which would support both its social and economic development and link its initiative to peacebuilding at national level. As a result, the autonomy of the ATCC became weaker and weaker over the years. In 2001, the ATCC reminds in its development plan that

The destabilization of the organisation's social basis by the lack of development alternatives, by state neglect, [and] by the excessive progress of coca crops and illegal armed groups, make necessary the search for different alternatives that would lead to both the stabilisation of the social basis [of the organisation] and the continuity of the autonomy of an organisation which has been recognised for its achievements toward the struggle for development and peace in the region.⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, pp.10: 20.

⁷²² Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, pp.10: 25.

⁷²³ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', pp. 410-411.

⁷²⁴ Archivo ATCC, 'Proyecto Elaboración del plan de desarrollo de la región de La India, Área de Influencia de la Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare. Julio 2001'. Caja 22 Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 5 c.22, p. 2.

The 2001 ATCC development plan reflects the challenges faced by the association at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the years 2000. Internal divisions, an increase in paramilitary activities, and the growing attraction represented by coca crops for the inhabitants of the region contributed to the weakening of the association. In *El orden desarmado*, the authors emphasise this lack of organic cohesion of leadership, members, and proposed programmes to explain the difficulties faced by the ATCC and the failure of its development plan.⁷²⁵ While I agree with such explanation, I would add that it is not sufficient to explain the weakness of the ATCC as an organisation. Its attitude towards the state and the way the organisation addressed the issue of political power is key to understanding why the ATCC is not the binding force it was about to become in the late 1980s.

The cycle that started in 2001, when the association reached the peak of its crisis and the solutions put forward to solve it, are quite illustrative in this regard. The ATCC, more than other social actors, has targeted state institutions with the aim of bringing the state back to the Carare region. In this regard, the development plans of the association have served as a platform or base from which to mobilise the support of other social actors. This was true in 1988 when the association came up with its first development plan, participated in the Third Peasant Forum of the Carare-Opón Region and in the 'Gran dialogo para la paz in 1990', as I mentioned earlier. In fact, as part of the final recommendations of the Third Carare-Opón Forum, it is stated that grassroots peasant organisations should 'politically and massively support the programs of agrarian reforms and the programs of state support to settlers and small and medium owners'⁷²⁶. Members of the Forum should not wear down energy 'in pointless struggles about the total rejection of state programs and laws'⁷²⁷. On the contrary, disagreements about the agrarian policy should be communicated to the government 'in a peaceful and democratic manner while also putting permanent pressure through our own grassroots peasant organisations, the FOCO, or peasant organisations of a national character.'⁷²⁸

This attitude towards the state persisted by the time of the 2001 project which eventually materialised in the 2004–2014 development plan. Even though the ATCC did manage to involve certain state entities and receive help from them in its first years of

⁷²⁵ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado'.

⁷²⁶ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, pp.17-18.

⁷²⁷ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, pp.17-18.

⁷²⁸ Archivo ATCC, 'Memorias del 3er Foro Campesino del Carare Opón', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.21/1, pp.17-18.

existence, its 1992 development plan reiterated that ‘the institutional presence has only been by the state, and has been short-term, that is to say it was restricted to the search for solutions to the consequences of the problems, but not to its causes.’ It goes on to affirm that ‘there is no real solution’ to the roots causes of the problems, and ‘no projects looking towards a better future for the dweller of the region’.⁷²⁹ In 2001, the ATCC was still facing the same problems. Even though some small-scale economic and development projects had been implemented, they had not provided any solution to any of the structural problems behind the armed conflict.⁷³⁰ The leaders of the ATCC then came up with the idea to organise a regional peasant congress – the First Peasant Congress for Peace – which took place from 28 to 30 June 2001. This was the result of a collaboration with the Corporación de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (CDPMM) and the elaboration of a project aimed at ‘strengthening the ATCC as an organisation representing a perspective of peace and hopes of development’.⁷³¹ The report of this regional peasant congress states that

The peasant congress is important, because it enables us to find and ratify a place in which we all exist through our voice and words, where we strengthen our link with a large network, and construct for our country a proposal that enables the nurturing of the social fabric, to which we are called and committed in Colombia.⁷³²

Discussions during this congress identified several needs and challenges, including the strengthening of the negotiations with armed actors and the design of ‘dignified social, economic and environmental alternatives’.⁷³³ The development plan conceived in 2001 was thus considered a tool to not only address the internal problems of the association, but also to negotiate with the armed actors, legal and illegal, offset the production of illicit cocoa crops, and ‘enable the management before different entities, NGOs, at the national and international scales’.⁷³⁴ This last point is important as it reflects the ATCC’s strategy to promote development and peace in the region through the involvement of local, regional and national state entities. As a result, the 2004–2014 plan states in its introduction that it will

⁷²⁹ Archivo ATCC, 1992 Development Plan. 27 April 1992. Caja 22 Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 4 c.22: 9

⁷³⁰ Archivo ATCC, ‘Proyecto Elaboración del plan de desarrollo de la región de La India, Área de Influencia de la Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare. Julio de 2001’. Caja 22, Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 5 c.22, p. 2.

⁷³¹ Archivo ATCC, ‘Términos de referencia para la contratación del proyecto fortalecimiento de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare. 15 de Octubre 2001’. Caja 21, Memorias de eventos\Carpeta 5 c.21, p. 6.

⁷³² Archivo ATCC, ‘Congreso Regional Campesino – Por el desarrollo Socio-económico y el Fortalecimiento del Proceso de Paz de la ATCC. 31 de Mayo- 2 de Junio 2001’. Caja 21, Memorias de eventos\Carpeta 5 c.21, p. 10.

⁷³³ Archivo ATCC, ‘Proyecto Elaboración del plan de desarrollo de la región de La India, Área de Influencia de la Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare. Julio 2001’. Caja 22, Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 5 c.22, p. 4.

⁷³⁴ Archivo ATCC, ‘Plan de desarrollo de la localidad de La India. 6 de enero 1988’. Caja 22 Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 2 c.22, p. 2

enable the ATCC to 'establish new and fruitful relationships of concertation and participation, both within and outside the organisation, especially with the administrations of municipalities inside the sphere of influence [of the ATCC], and with institutions present in the region'. The plan further argues that these relationships 'could bring specific programs and projects aiming to solve the lack of public and social services, basic sanitation, infrastructure and productive projects, thus creating a harmonious working platform and interinstitutional and crosscutting coordination'. Finally, this should encourage municipal bodies to fulfil the 'constitutional and legal provisions that require territorial bodies to plan and use public resources with efficiency and adequacy according to needs and local potential'.⁷³⁵

This quotation clearly shows that the ATCC seeks to 'bring the state back in' within the existing liberal constitutional arrangements, rather than challenging the social basis of the state and seeking structural reforms. In the sixth section of the plan, it is stated that 'the logic of local development require the consolidation of the relationship between public and private sectors and the participation of the community, both necessary to develop the potential of all actors involved'.⁷³⁶ The plan considers that the ATCC should get in touch and agree with state entities at the municipal, departmental, and national level about how to manage and channel support and funding of the plan. As such, 'the development of a permanent participative planning will imply the design of procedures which will allow permanent contact with different state entities at the governmental level and with NGOs'.⁷³⁷ Arguably, the plan lays out a very technical and institutional vision of how social transformation should be achieved, more akin to the typical projects implemented by international NGOs and cooperation agencies than grassroots organisations. It emphasises a participative planning process which should 'allow the knowledge of the different actors involved in the [...] solutions of a problem or need'.⁷³⁸ This can be explained by the fact that the process that led to the design of this plan was conducted as part of the Peace Laboratories, the EU programmes for cooperation and development in conflict zones in Colombia.⁷³⁹

Asked about the reasons why they consider the state as a legitimate authority in spite of having suffered because of state violence, one of the ATCC members argued that the armed

⁷³⁵ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo integral del área de influencia de la ATCC 2004-2014', Caja 22, Planes de Desarrollo\Carpeta 6 c.22, p. 5.

⁷³⁶ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo integral del área de influencia de la ATCC 2004-2014', p. 256.

⁷³⁷ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo integral del área de influencia de la ATCC 2004-2014', p. 257.

⁷³⁸ Archivo ATCC, 'Plan de desarrollo integral del área de influencia de la ATCC 2004-2014', p. 258.

⁷³⁹ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 421.

forces were accepted as legitimate because this is what the Constitution says. As citizens, he explains, they could not ignore the state armed forces as they could in turn deny their legal, civil, social and political rights, in spite of being the guardians of these rights according to the Constitution.⁷⁴⁰ Since the creation of the association, the ATCC has worked with state entities in order to strengthen its organisational process and obtain guarantees, both for the implementation of its development plans and for the implementation of a compensation plan as victims of the armed conflict. Its main institutional interlocutor was INCORA. One of the first formal events was organised between 19 and 22 April 1987 with two aims in mind. First, the ATCC wanted to 'promote the association both within its social basis with the aim of achieving total participation of its associates, and outward to seek the effective and continuous relationship with state and private entities'.⁷⁴¹ The second objective was to 'determine strategies that allow for the implementation and execution of the development plan of the township of La India'.⁷⁴² In the meeting report, the state was reaffirmed as the sole bearer of legal authority.⁷⁴³ The ATCC was actually quite successful in obtaining resources from the state in the few years following its creation.⁷⁴⁴ However, it lost much of its influence throughout the 1990s, to such an extent that it is now perceived as lacking the strength to be a powerful hegemonic actor for social change. The ATCC has not been able to overcome corporate particularisms. Neither has it been able to integrate its demands within a narrative including national-popular incentives. While it has managed to develop social, institutional, and ideational processes which enabled its members to overcome the direct challenges posed by the armed conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, the ATCC has failed to create the material conditions, either social, spatial or economic, that could have led to the development of solid alternatives. Indeed, the ATCC lacked both the form or ideology, and the content or social alliances, necessary to make a strong alternative historical bloc. The failure of its economic development plans reflects the fact that it has not managed to lead a successful 'intellectual and moral reform' of an organic character. Its attitude towards the state and its critical consciousness were not radical enough to truly challenge the

⁷⁴⁰ ATCC#9.

⁷⁴¹ Archivos ATCC, 'Seminario para la promoción y consolidación de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare "A.T.C.C."', Caja 20/Carpeta 1 c.20/1, p. 1.

⁷⁴² Archivo ATCC, 'Seminario para la promoción y consolidación de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare "A.T.C.C."', p. 1.

⁷⁴³ Archivo ATCC, 'Seminario para la promoción y consolidación de la asociación de trabajadores campesinos del Carare "A.T.C.C."', p. 4.

⁷⁴⁴ Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 'El orden desarmado', p. 162.

reproduction of state power, gather support at the national and international scales, and maintain coherence and unity as the context changed.

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

The current ATCC situation contrasts with the achievements of the CdPSJA. The struggle led by the CdPSJA in spite of all the massacres, harassment, and other human rights violations the community's members had to go through, has come to represent a symbol of resilience and moral virtue. Anrup and Español have even argued that the case of the CdPSJA calls into question the legitimacy of the state and its juridical system. They affirm that

the autonomy of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó challenges and questions the sovereignty of the state through the actions and strategies of its settlers who, while resisting and emancipating themselves from the state-based system, produce new forms of power and participative democracy.⁷⁴⁵

Autonomy and emancipation from the state and the consequences of neoliberalism are two key dimensions of the CdPSJA struggle. In the previous chapter, I dealt with the protection strategies of the CdPSJA, reaching out to the international community in order to exert pressure on the Colombian state, in particular through the development of a narrative that Gwen Burnyeat terms 'victim-drama'.⁷⁴⁶ Building on Anrup and Español's argument and using Gramsci's insights, I show in this section that the legal strategies of the CdPSJA have wider implications for challenging state power, and are not enough as such to materially challenge this power. Other communities have used such legal strategies but lacked the support of a strong bloc of social forces in order to successfully strengthen their autonomy. But these other communities did not decide to break with the state and its legal system. The CdPSJA has accompanied the ethico-political dimension of its struggle with the design of concrete economic and social alternatives, which it tries to strengthen through the development of alliances at international level and to a lesser extent at a grassroots national level. Indeed, through these alliances with other organisations and social groups, the CdPSJA has developed a new common sense which poses a challenge not only to the state's sovereignty but to the very social system on which the state relies. In this regard, the CdPSJA has come up with economic, political, legal, and social alternatives to the ones represented by the capitalist system and the state, and seeks to isolate its territory and members from the consequences

⁷⁴⁵ Anrup, R. and Español, J. 'Una comunidad de paz', p. 167.

⁷⁴⁶ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 19.

of the latter. My contention is that the CdPSJA's alliance-building efforts have led to the development of an alternative historical bloc. The latter relies on a radical critical consciousness with national-popular incentives for its form, and on the mobilisation of international actors and institutions on the one hand, and grassroots solidarity at both national and international scales on the other, for its content. As the node of this alternative historical bloc, the CdPSJA claims to be proof that another system is possible against the capitalist mode of production. It has concentrated its efforts on the diffusion of its ideals and the promotion of its struggle through civil society at international level, while also trying to build alliances with other peasant, Afro-Colombian, and indigenous communities at national level.

Ever since its inception in March 1997, the CdPSJA and the ideas on which it relied were the product of alliances and coalitions. I have shown in the previous chapter how various actors and discourses converged in order to allow for the creation of the Peace Community as a strategy to protect both the territory and the members of the community. However, the same principles of neutrality and non-violence, and the withdrawal of consent were eventually used as the basis of strategies aimed at strengthening the autonomy of the community, building peace, and bringing about social change, to the extent that the initiative of the CdPSJA could be characterised as the making of an alternative community.⁷⁴⁷ For this purpose, the networks and alliances that the CdPSJA has managed to establish are key. At first, the Peace Community benefited from the support of the CIJP in order to reach out to the international community. Nowadays, it is one of the best internationally connected grassroots communities in Colombia. Over the past 19 years, it has interacted with many different international organisations, including ABColombia, Amnesty International, PBI, FoR, the Solidarity Campaign with Colombia, XXI Solidario, the Human Rights Verification Commission of Valencia, the Spanish Commission for the Support of Refugees, the Rete Italiana di Solidarieta Colombia Vive, Kolko, and the Human Rights International Network.⁷⁴⁸ Such a strategy has been characterized by Maria Teresa Uribe as an 'emancipatory defiance' or 'rebelliousness' which requires the development of autonomous forms of social organisations and alternative practices leading to the production of power.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁷ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, pp. 194-201.

⁷⁴⁸ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 69.

⁷⁴⁹ Uribe de Hincapié, M.T. 'Emancipación social', p. 82.

I have shown in the previous chapter how support from the international community made possible the protection of the CdPSJA, its territory, and its people. However, these international connections not only focus on the protection dimension. Although the links between the community and international organisations are based on a human rights discourse and aim to protect these rights through the application of the international Human Rights legal framework, there is another dimension which keeps these links alive and goes further than the mere protection of the community or respect of human rights. Solidarity, dignity, justice, and the will to find alternatives to capitalism and state oppression are the ideological binding elements of relationships between the community and other international organisations or networks. They are, in other words, the form of this alternative historical bloc. This solidarity and dignity dimension is manifest during the several peregrinations that the CdPSJA organises every year. International organisations and individuals usually attend these peregrinations, during which their role go further than mere observers or partners implementing a cooperation project. Some read a text from the Bible. Others, like FoR members did when I participated in one these walks, read a text out loud in solidarity with the community and sang its anthem. This solidarity dimension is all the more visible in the links that the community has established with other grassroots international organisations or even European cities. In this regard, the examples of the Spanish Acompaz network, the Rete Colombia Vive!, and the city council of Burgos in Spain are illustrative. Acompaz was born in Madrid in 2005 as a grassroots movement in support of the CdPSJA. It is composed of several groups and individuals who feel a 'deep appreciation and affection' for the Peace Community:

The shared suffering for one of the most horrendous aggression committed against [the] community on the 21st of February 2005, have become an extraordinary energy and a will of collective cooperation in favour of the heroic and astonishing struggle pursued by the San José Community, from a position of nonviolence, in favour of life and dignity.⁷⁵⁰

This quotation is interesting in that it makes clear that the link between the Peace Community and these groups and individuals goes beyond the protection needs of the CdPSJA and the respect for human rights. The emotional dimension is evident here, through the sharing of the suffering of the CdPSJA. Acompaz has as its objective the promotion of the initiative led by the Peace Community, the gathering of support, and participation in the 'support to the set of health, ecological, and productive projects which are truly respectful of nature and

⁷⁵⁰ Acompaz, *Sembrando paz*, Boletín nº 1 (Enero de 2006). Available at: <http://www.grupotortuga.com/Acompaz-boletin-de-la-Asociacion> (Accessed 25 May 2017)

human beings, of the memory of the community and the education for autonomy and freedom'. The overarching goal is to fight 'for a non-violent world and the access to a land where peace prevails'.⁷⁵¹ Acompaz has realised several activities, including a gathering of international grassroots organisations in Madrid in February 2005, a protest in front of the Colombian embassy in Madrid in February 2006, and the writing of letters addressed to European governments, members of parliament, or UN agencies, urging them to put pressure on the Colombian state to protect the CdPSJA. This example is also illustrative of a tendency of foreigners and international grassroots organisations to idealise the initiative of the CdPSJA. Aparicio argues that the CdPSJA has become the main objective of the desires, aspirations, and utopias of international groups and individuals who say they cannot find other alternatives in their own countries.⁷⁵² But he also notes that the CdPSJA has used these desires, aspirations, and utopias to such an extent that they have become a very important part of its efforts to obtain support and funds. However, in spite of the power dynamics and hierarchies which might emerge as part of the relationships between the Peace Community and external actors, the CdPSJA has always managed to preserve its autonomy. Although autonomy is always relative, it has been sustained thanks to the community's internal strength and the authority of its internal Council, formed by organic intellectuals.⁷⁵³ I have seen how this Council told a South-African visitor to leave after spending a few nights within the community. They were not sure about his intentions and motivations.

In March 2007, the Rete Italiana and Acompaz organised an international human rights delegation which participated in the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the creation of the CdPSJA.⁷⁵⁴ The press release which followed this delegation reiterates the solidarity and friendship of the participating organisations with the CdPSJA. It also emphasises the operate in a dignified way. Similar motivations were visible during the Fourth International Forum 'Colombia Vive' in October 2007, also organised by Rete Colombia Vive!, and which convened organisations and entities from six European countries and the USA. The final report of this gathering reaffirms the 'universal value' of the non-violent struggle led by the CdPSJA and other communities resisting the armed conflict. According to participants,

⁷⁵¹ Acompaz, *Sembrando paz*, Boletín n° 1.

⁷⁵² Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, pp. 266-267.

⁷⁵³ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, pp. 266-267.

⁷⁵⁴ Rete Colombia Vive!, 'Delegazione Internazionale Solidale con le Comunità di Pace e Comunità in Resistenza Civile Colombiane', Comunicado Stampa, 31st of March 2007.

these communities have 'defined forms of solidary economies and dignified lives through which they contribute in a concrete way to the construction of a different world'.⁷⁵⁵ Finally, the City Council of Burgos, in Spain, signed an agreement of solidary collaboration with the CdPSJA and one of the city squares was given the name of the CdPSJA. As part of this twinning agreement, the city of Burgos has carried out several educational, production, and infrastructural projects, led initiatives in defence of human rights, and organised actions to promote and raise awareness around the situation of the CdPSJA. More recently, it issued an institutional declaration in support of the peace process between the government and FARC.⁷⁵⁶

While the CdPSJA has always privileged cooperation with the international scale, it has also developed alliances at the national scale. The establishment of solidarity links, the sharing of knowledge, and the building of alternatives are the three main dimensions of these initiatives. To illustrate this, I analyse what I consider the most representative and important attempts made by the CdPSJA to build alliances at national level. For example, the RECORRE network was born in September 2003 when a group of ten communities from many different and diverse Colombian regions and ethnic backgrounds gathered in San José de Apartadó.⁷⁵⁷ This encounter is a key step leading to the decision by the CdPSJA to break all relationships with the state.⁷⁵⁸ The RECORRE network was then formally created in December 2003 after a follow-up meeting in Bogotá.⁷⁵⁹ In addition to the CdPSJA, the other nine organisations are the Arauca Peasants Association, the Indigenous Cabildos Association of North Cauca, the U'wa indigenous community, the Community Council of the Naya River Valley, the Community Council of the Nupa Caunapi River, the Agromining Federation of South Bolivar, the Community Process of Cartagena del Chairá, and the Black Communities Initiative (PCN). Not only have all these organisations been the target of systematic persecutions, forced displacements, and massacres from the state, paramilitary groups, or the guerrillas, they have also been at the bottom of the racial hierarchy since Spanish colonisation.⁷⁶⁰ They all live on

⁷⁵⁵ Rete Colombia Vive!, '4º Foro Internacional ' Colombia Vive'. Documento final' (Treviso, Rete Colombia Vive!, 14th October 2007).

⁷⁵⁶ Ayuntamiento de Burgos, 'Ayuntamiento de Burgos celebra acuerdos sobre justicia de La Habana' (Burgos, Ayuntamiento de Burgos, Miércoles 20 de Enero 2016). Available at: <http://colectivodeabogados.org/?Ayuntamiento-de-Burgos-celebra-acuerdo-sobre-justicia-de-La-Habana> (Accessed 15 May 2017).

⁷⁵⁷ RECORRE, '¿Qué es la Red de Comunidades en Ruptura y Resistencia?' (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/quesomos.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017)

⁷⁵⁸ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*, p. 99.

⁷⁵⁹ Comunidades campesinas declaran ruptura con el sistema judicial colombiano. *Recorre*. 2003.

⁷⁶⁰ Aparicio, J.R. *Rumores*, p. 271.

lands rich in natural resources which have been the subject of huge economic projects aimed at extracting these resources, such as oil, palm trees, bananas, or cocoa crops. One of the aims of the gathering and the network is 'to build bonds of solidarity in the context of the lived situations through which the communities are going through'.⁷⁶¹ Implicit in the first declaration published by the network is the idea that in order to generate autonomous alternatives, they have to break all collaboration with the legal system. In this regard, the aim is to design an alternative 'from the rupture with justice', implying an 'international, national, and internal labour with communities'.⁷⁶² The declaration then defines the principles that unite together these communities. A clear position on the Colombian state – a 'fascist state', 'the main aggressor and responsible (...) of the atrocities committed against communities',⁷⁶³ and the promotor of paramilitary groups – is exposed. The anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberalism nature of the network is also explained, as the violence these communities have suffered is the 'product of a system which generates death, as neoliberalism does in its actions in favour of multinationals',⁷⁶⁴ which benefit a few and exclude the majority. But more importantly, the organisations have decided to break with the Colombian legal system due to the continuous use of terror by the state and widespread impunity. The declaration explains that collaborating with such a legal system would mean being a part of the logic of terror and impunity which characterises this very same system. These principles are meant to generate common bonds between communities while respecting their autonomy. For instance, it is stated that 'the network cannot be the spokesperson of the communities, neither does it replace them in their actions of resistance as communities, and as such in their creative and autonomous practices'.⁷⁶⁵ On the contrary, the network represents a search for help and coordination between communities, a space for the sharing of information, the coordination of activities, and the design of strategies. It is interesting to note that whilst these organisations have broken with the Colombian legal system, they ground their decisions in the Constitution of Colombia, in particular the Article 18 which guarantees the right of

⁷⁶¹ RECORRE, '¿Qué es la Red de Comunidades en Ruptura y Resistencia?'

⁷⁶² RECORRE, 'Justificación del Proceso de Ruptura', (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/ruptura.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁶³ RECORRE, 'Justificación del Proceso de Ruptura', (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/ruptura.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁶⁴ RECORRE, 'Justificación del Proceso de Ruptura', (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/ruptura.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁶⁵ RECORRE, 'Justificación del Proceso de Ruptura', (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/ruptura.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

conscientious objection. In this case, the conscientious objection is put into practice through the ‘no collaboration with a legal system which violates fundamental and universal principles’, such as ‘the principle of legality’ and the ‘principle of due process in reason of the lack of an independent and impartial court’.⁷⁶⁶

The search for economic, legal, and political alternatives outside the institutional political channels and the creation of new channels for the political participation of the organisations’ members are the other component of the RECORRE network. These dimensions combine with the ideological views expressed in order to shape the making of an alternative historical bloc. The second encounter of the network aimed at designing solidary economic alternatives which would enable communities to ground their search in ‘an alternative daily life based on the community, solidarity, and on the search for truth and justice’.⁷⁶⁷ But above all, this is the meaning of the Peasant University, which was born out of the encounters of the RECORRE network⁷⁶⁸. It was conceived as an alternative space where communities could receive both theoretical and practical training, opposed to capitalism and the current function of formal and official universities. The words alternative, resistance, solidarity, dignity, and diversity repeat throughout the declaration which officialised the creation of the Peasant University. The idea is not only to share knowledge or for the ‘university [to] live off the resistance of communities’, but also for this joint production of knowledge to benefit communities.⁷⁶⁹ This knowledge would thus serve the communities’ resistance and would be produced from the lived reality of the communities in favour of their search for alternatives.⁷⁷⁰ We see here how culture and politics are intermingled, leading to the intellectual and moral reform which Gramsci considers key for the formation of a national-popular will and a new historical bloc. The CdPSJA and its allies mobilise cultural elements coming from peasants’ everyday life as the basis for the design of alternatives. According to the University’s founders, ‘being in the university is a conception of a new reality, an alternative world that is trying to generate a new state and society, against consumerism and

⁷⁶⁶ RECORRE, ‘Justificación del Proceso de Ruptura’, (Undated). Available at: <http://www.prensarural.org/recorre/ruptura.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁶⁷ RECORRE, ‘Segundo encuentro de comunidades en resistencia civil’, (San José de Apartadó, CdPSJA. 2004). Available at: <http://prensarural.org/recorre/apartado20041206.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁶⁸ RECORRE, ‘Por una universidad de la vida y la Resistencia’ (RECORRE, 23 May 2005). Available at: <http://prensarural.org/recorre/universidad.htm> (Accessed 25 May 2017)

⁷⁶⁹ RECORRE, ‘Por una universidad de la vida y la Resistencia’.

⁷⁷⁰ RECORRE, ‘Por una universidad de la vida y la Resistencia’.

capitalism, and based in solidarity and the right of the people'.⁷⁷¹ This new critical consciousness that has emerged from the exchanges between communities is even clearer in a passage which is worth quoting at length. It is argued that this is

...a university in opposition to that consumption logic [based] on coming in and out to generate capitalist exploitation and to be able to maintain that dynamic, it is a university that is fundamentally opposed to this; It is the search for a dignified world, with justice, based on clear horizons of truth, memory, resistance, full anti-capitalism and as a consequence, it stands up for an alternative solidarity economy, [a sense of] community, the search of justice and a legitimate state, alternative laws, and not based on lies and a system that does not think for communities but for their exploitation and death, so we think about the land, about humanity, about the history that has been creating victims, it is from there that this alternative university comes from.⁷⁷²

The Peasant University first met in August 2004 in the main settlement of the CdPSJA, before meeting again in San Vicente del Caguan, in the southern part of Colombia, in March 2005 (Ruiz, 2005).⁷⁷³ Since then, it has only met a few times, due to lack of funding. During these sessions, communities discussed legal and political alternatives, and shared and designed experiences and strategies of resistance. Courses on agriculture, health and education were also taught. In particular, this included the sharing and use of original seeds, the production of organic compost, and the use of indigenous traditional medicines, with an emphasis on food sovereignty and autonomy.

The Peace Community succeeded in developing strong alliances at international level with grassroots international organisations based on solidarity and a critical consciousness that transcend both its local setting and international borders. These alliances support the ideological positions of the CdPSJA and enable it to develop alternatives. Through these alliances, the CdPSJA managed to create the political, cultural, and ideological conditions necessary for its survival. Such conditions are also key to the economic projects that reflect this intellectual and moral reform and new critical consciousness, such as the organisation of collective working groups I mentioned in the previous chapter, or the cultivation and commercialisation of cocoa with the British company Lush. This symbolises the success of the CdPSJA to develop an organic critical consciousness based on peasants' everyday life and culture, and to connect it with international discourses on human rights, dignity, and food production.

⁷⁷¹ RECORRE, 'Por una universidad de la vida y la Resistencia'.

⁷⁷² RECORRE, 'Por una universidad de la vida y la Resistencia'.

⁷⁷³ Ruiz M., 'La Universidad de la resistencia', *Semana* (Bogotá), 22 May 2005. Available at: <http://www.semana.com/online/articulo/la-universidad-resistencia/72716-3> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

The CdPSJA has thus managed to locate itself at the centre of an alternative bloc of grassroots social forces that challenges the legitimacy of both the state and the capitalist system. These alliances have enabled the CdPSJA to strengthen its autonomy and made possible the rupture of any relationships with the state and its legal system. They have also enabled the CdPSJA to position itself as the living proof that another world is possible and that alternatives to the current state, economic, and war system are possible as well, in what could be termed a radical idealism. For one of the main leaders of the Peace Community, social change is linked to a change in consciousness. And asked whether the CdPSJA could contribute to the making of a progressive consciousness, he had this answer: 'We already are, aren't we? We have been for 17 years with difficulty, but we have already contributed quite a lot, haven't we?'⁷⁷⁴ This quote symbolises the radical idealism practiced by the CdPSJA.

The Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association

The radical idealism of the CdPSJA contrasts with the radical pragmatism of the ACVC. Its attitude towards the state can be characterised as one of *de facto* acceptance of the state while denouncing its crimes and aiming to transform its institutions and challenge its social basis. ACVC members have revolutionary elements within their political culture, but they also come from a political tradition which, although radical, has always accepted the state as a legitimate authority.⁷⁷⁵ This issue generated debates between members of the ACVC, revolving around whether the organisation should be a kind of militant of the subversion, or adopt ideas on social and political issues which, whilst close to the subversion's position, rejected the use of violence and adopted different strategies of social transformation.⁷⁷⁶

This amenable attitude towards the state is clearly visible within the alliance-building initiatives led by the ACVC, or in those in which it took a prominent role. This attitude can already be seen before the creation of the ACVC. The association was born out of a long history of protests, strikes, and rallies led by peasants of the Magdalena Medio Region, such as the 1996 *marcha campesina* and the 1998 *exodo campesino* in Barrancabermeja.⁷⁷⁷ These protests paved the way for the creation of the ACVC in 1996 and characterised its first years

⁷⁷⁴ CdP#9.

⁷⁷⁵ Church#2, Bogotá, 20 April 2014.

⁷⁷⁶ Church#2.

⁷⁷⁷ ACVC#17, Barrancabermeja, 20 May 2014.

of existence. In this regard, Jerez explains that the efforts of the ACVC aim to ‘stir all this, all this accumulated social and political experience, and turn it into a proposition and a reference of regional peacebuilding effort’.⁷⁷⁸ After 20 years of existence, the ACVC managed to gather the thousands of peasants living in the Cimitarra River Valley, receive a prestigious national peace award in 2010, and take prominent and leading roles in national social and political movements such as ANZORC, the Patriotic March movement, and the National and Agrarian Summit: Peasant, ethnic, and popular (Cumbre nacional agraria: campesina, étnica, y popular). It also established links with the Latin American Coordination for Rural Organisations (CLOC), and created or organised alternative channels of political participation at local level. It has thus become one of the most prominent grassroots social actors in Colombia, with some of its leaders being recognised as amongst the most powerful individuals of social mobilisation.⁷⁷⁹

The ACVC affirms that the 2010 national peace award, issued by the German and French embassies, made it aware of its newly assumed moral and political responsibility in order to convene the insurgency, the widest possible sectors within society and the state, and the international community to ‘talk about the possibilities of a dignified peace, with a view to endow social conflicts in Colombia with a distinct course’.⁷⁸⁰ This resulted in the organisation of the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Communities for the Peace of Colombia, in August 2011. The general objective of the gathering is to ‘create a wide space [to promote] the socialization of negotiated political proposals for peace in Colombia from the lived experiences of rural communities’.⁷⁸¹ As such, peasants, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities would gather to design alternatives ‘in dialogue with the government, guilds, and other sectors which are committed to peace within local, regional, national and international settings’.⁷⁸² Here, the aim clearly is for rural communities to form the new historical bloc on which peace could grow and the country could develop socially and economically. Further, the ACVC aims to ‘provide to the Colombian society as a whole with (...) a stage led by the communities themselves in order to bring all

⁷⁷⁸ ACVC#1.

⁷⁷⁹ Vélez, J. ‘Los Super poderosos de la movilización social – 2016’, *La Silla Vacía* (Bogotá), 30 May 2016. Available at <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/los-super-poderosos-de-la-movilizacion-social-55982> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁷⁸⁰ Tierra, ‘Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas pro la Paz de Colombia’, *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 5, Octubre 2010 - Mayo 2011, p. 2.

⁷⁸¹ Tierra, ‘Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas pro la Paz de Colombia’.

⁷⁸² Tierra, ‘Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas pro la Paz de Colombia’.

social and political actors together so they can envisage, and build a country on hope, with proposals for peace and not war'.⁷⁸³ This gathering, which would later be called the National Meeting of Peasant, Afrodescendant and Indigenous Communities for the Land and Peace of Colombia, was in fact a symbol of the capacity of the ACVC to mobilise communities from diverse ethnic and geographical backgrounds, and its potential to forge an alternative historical bloc gathering different sectors and social forces within Colombian society under a same critical consciousness. Indeed, this event gathered more than 24 000 people in Barrancabermeja, and was accompanied by the regional archbishop, the governors of the Santander Department, and the municipality of Barrancabermeja. Its motto was 'dialogue is the way to go'. The ACVC explicitly argued in its presentation in one of the working groups set up during the event that '[they] need to make reality the idea according to which dialogue is the way to go'. They go on to explain that 'materialising this implies':

...the widest possible social and popular participation. The political solution cannot be a matter of exclusive competence (responsibility) of the parties directly involved in the armed struggle. "All voices all, all hands all" of this country need to be heard and mobilised in order to lay the foundations that will allow us to move forward toward peace with social justice. This entails a hard tasks of organisation, politicization, and social mobilisation, that we wish to assume with all those willing to follow it. The presence in this meeting of thousands of peasants, men and women, young people, delegations of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, workers, church delegates, and of diverse expressions of social mobilisation, intellectuals, human rights and peace activists, is a wonderful example of what is possible and above all that there is grounds for hope. This space is to be built and widen.⁷⁸⁴

The final declaration of the meeting made clear the opposition of participants to the current state policies which 'promote an economic model that favours the intensive exploitation of our land and natural resources, benefit transnational companies and economic groups', and 'deepen land related conflicts and the struggle for the territory'.⁷⁸⁵ According to participants, such a model not only destroys peasant economies and intensifies the armed conflict, but also 'encourages new processes of expropriation, dispossession and forced displacement, radically damages social processes and jeopardizes our food sovereignty and security'.⁷⁸⁶ Against this, the declaration argues that a new economic and political model is required, and that a political, negotiated solution to the armed conflict has to be found. The organisations

⁷⁸³ Tierra, 'Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas pro la Paz de Colombia'.

⁷⁸⁴ ACVC, 'Por la solución política al conflicto social y armado y la paz con justicia social en Colombia. Ponencia de la ACVC en la mesa de Política Nacional de Paz', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n°10, Septiembre 2011, p. 10.

⁷⁸⁵ Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, 'El dialogo es la ruta', (Barrancabermeja, Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, 2011), pp. 73-74.

⁷⁸⁶ Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, 'El dialogo es la ruta', pp. 73-74.

participating in the meeting made clear that ‘dialogue is the way to go’, and that laying the ground for a ‘peace with social justice’ requires the creation of a ‘nation-wide movement with international support’ and ‘the widest possible social and popular participation’.⁷⁸⁷ However, the declaration makes clear that while such a movement should be based on the diversity of current social and popular collective actions, be they ethnic, popular, rural or even gender-based, it should also respect social organisations and their autonomy.⁷⁸⁸ It is clear then that the strategies of social transformation promoted by the ACVC involve the popular mobilisation of many different sectors of Colombian society through the creation of grassroots channels of political participation, and the channelling of their interests towards the design of social, economic and political alternatives. On the other hand, the formation of such a bloc of social forces and alternatives is meant to exert pressure on the government. Both the initiatives of the ACVC to design alternatives from the bottom up and the role it has taken in movements such as the Patriotic March (MP), the Agriculture and Popular Roundtable for Dialogue and Agreement (MIA), ANZORC, and the Agricultural National Summit: Peasant, Ethnical and Popular (CNACEP), follow this logic.

Two significant channels developed by the ACVC in order to promote political participation at the grassroots level are the Communal Roundtable for the Dignified Life of the Region (MCVDR) and the Peace Constituents (CP). The creation of the former was supported by the ACVC in 2005 as an ‘organisational space through which the primary constituent’, conceived of as a ‘political subject’, ‘is connected to the construction of a popular power in its local and regional setting’.⁷⁸⁹ The use of the concept of popular power plays an important role in the narrative developed by the MP and the CNACEP. As for the MCVDR, it was conceived as a structure through which peasants could ‘politically channel the activities related to the assertion of rights and demands of social investment in the region’.⁷⁹⁰ It has initially made possible the organisation of peasants under a regional structure, the legitimisation of communities, and the strengthening of peasants’ demands and interlocution with the state. More recently, the MCVDR channelled the contribution of peasants to the

⁷⁸⁷ Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, ‘El dialogo es la ruta’, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁸⁸ Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, ‘El dialogo es la ruta’, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁸⁹ Mesa comunal por la vida digna de la región, ‘Construyendo poder popular’, *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n°13, Enero-Mayo 2013, pp. 15-17.

⁷⁹⁰ Mesa comunal por la vida digna de la región, ‘Construyendo poder popular’, 15.

review and elaboration of the development plan of the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Reserve Zone.⁷⁹¹ The other channel promoted by the ACVC was first formulated during the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Communities for the Peace of Colombia mentioned earlier. The Regional Peace Constituents were designed as a space to 'build a social and popular mandate for the political solution [of the armed conflict] and peace with social justice'. Such a process is conceived as the product of a wide organisation and mobilisation, which would gather all voices in favour of peace. Its objectives illustrate the ambition of this initiative to develop forums for the political solution of the armed and social conflict; reaffirm the key role of popular and grassroots participation to any solution of this very same conflict through the mobilisation of social movements; and emphasise the need for political, economic and social reforms if any solution to the conflict is to be found.⁷⁹² Launched in February 2013 in Bogotá, six months after the beginning of the peace process between the FARC and the government, the national initiative of the peace constituents aims to move towards the creation of a National Constituent Assembly. This assembly would gather the existing regional constituents and 'create a setting for the endorsement of the agreements that will emerge from the peace dialogues unfolding in La Havana'.⁷⁹³ This national initiative was launched as part of the national political movement MP, in which the ACVC plays an influential role through the presence of Andres Gil, one of its historical leaders, as spokesperson. But the Peace Constituents are also supported by the agrarian constituent led by ANZORC, in which the ACVC exerts a key role through Cesar Jerez as spokesperson. This shows the connections and confluence between all these movements in an attempt to build a powerful popular social force, and the central role of the ACVC within and between all these movements and initiatives.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the ACVC first started to use the legal concept of the ZRC as a solution to forced displacement and the need to legally ground peasants' access and right to land. But the ACVC now uses the ZRC, which it characterises as the 'seed of peasant struggle' that must be 'cultivated through work, organisation and unity'⁷⁹⁴ in order to mobilise

⁷⁹¹ Mesa comunal por la vida digna de la región, 'Construyendo poder popular', pp. 15-16.

⁷⁹² Encuentro Nacional de Comunidades Campesinas, Afrodescendientes e Indígenas por la tierra y la paz de Colombia, 'El dialogo es la ruta', p. 86.

⁷⁹³ Prensa Constituyentes por la paz con Justicia Social, 'Las Constituyentes le apuestan a la Paz con Justicia Social', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja) n°13, Enero-Mayo 2013, p. 9.

⁷⁹⁴ *Tierra*, 'Zonas de Reserva Campesina: Semilla de la lucha campesina', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n°4, Septiembre 2010, p. 1.

peasants, exert pressure on the government, and ground its claim for building peace as well. This legal form has indeed become linked to the building of peace and now includes national-popular incentives as a result of the networks established between existing and potential ZRCs. When the Colombian government decided to legally recognise the Cimitarra Valley ZRC in 2010, the ACVC argued that this was 'an important step for the construction of settings which provide the possibility of finding a civilised solution to the profound economic, humanitarian, and security crisis that peasants of the Cimitarra River Valley have had to face'. It also states that the ZRC is 'a way to contribute to the construction of settings to move towards the achievement of peace with social justice'.⁷⁹⁵ Thanks to the official recognition of the Cimitarra River Valley as a ZRC and the legitimacy granted by the National Peace Award, the ACVC played a prominent role in the reactivation of ANZORC which was born in 2000 and now gathers all the existing ZRCs, be they legally recognised or not, as well as 50 other peasant movements and communities. Gathered in Barrancabermeja, where the ACVC has its headquarters, more than 300 peasant leaders created the Peasant Reserve Zones Organising Committee (CIZRC - Comité de impulso de las Zonas de Reserva Campesina) and redefined ANZORC's objectives and mission. In the declaration that followed this encounter, the ZRC is described as a tactical tool within the overarching strategy of the agrarian movement for an integral agrarian reform. In particular, it is a 'tool to keep moving forward in the accumulation of [social] forces for a truly inclusive society which recognize the historical and leading role fulfilled by the peasantry in our country'.⁷⁹⁶ ANZORC's demands go further than the fulfilment of corporate interests and needs of the peasantry, and include the recognition of the peasantry 'as a political actor and interlocutor able to build its own proposal of territorial regulation and development, to create agrarian alternatives that seek to guarantee a dignified life, the demand for peasants' rights, the preservation of the environment and the construction of peace with social justice'.⁷⁹⁷ Together with the concept of popular power, we find here three of the main issues – peasant rights as political subjects, the integral agrarian reform, and peace with social justice – that will feed into the creation of the Agriculture and Popular Roundtable for Dialogue and Agreement, and the Agricultural National Summit.

⁷⁹⁵ Tierra, 'Vuelve la Zona de Reserva Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n°5, Octubre 2010 – May 2011, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁶ Humanidad Vigente, 'Proclama por la conquista de una reforma agraria integral', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 4, Septiembre 2010, p. 4.

⁷⁹⁷ ANZORC, 'Defendemos las Zonas de Reservas Campesina', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 15, Septiembre-Noviembre 2013, p. 12.

These movements all seek to gain relevance at national level by building the widest possible alliances between progressive social groups within Colombian society.

Efforts to bind many different sectors of Colombian society together had in fact begun in 2010 already with the organisation of the Patriotic March. What started as a march in opposition to state policies in the context of the celebration of the bicentenary of Colombia's independence evolved in the following two years in a formal social and political movement. In between, the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Communities for the Peace of Colombia mentioned earlier, organised by the ACVC in 2011, played a key role in furthering the thinking and discussions that led to the creation of the Political and Social Movement Patriotic March in April 2012. The fact that Andres Gil, one of the historical leaders of the ACVC, is a spokesperson for the MP points to the predominantly agrarian basis of the movement, even though it also gathers cultural organisations, student movements, trade unions, and indigenous communities. In addition, it also counts on the active participation of two political forces, Izquierda Liberal en Marcha led by the prominent left wing activist Piedad Cordoba, and the Communist Party, symbolising the MP's electoral ambitions. Indeed, the MP is the movement in charge of 'challenging the political power of the government and the state in the hands of dominant classes'.⁷⁹⁸ Echoing the final declaration of the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Communities for the Peace of Colombia, the Patriotic March does not aim to dissolve the organisations and movements which take part in it, but to mobilise and connect these organisations and movements in order to 'look toward the strategic struggle for a model of country and society'.⁷⁹⁹ It aims to do so through the creation of grassroots channels of political participation, such as the Peace Constituents described earlier. In its political declaration, which remarkably makes use of a Gramscian vocabulary and tone, we find again the popular dimension and the claim to represent all subaltern social groups; the call for the unity of progressive social organisations and movements in order to challenge the traditional hegemonic bloc; the necessity of dialogue to solve the armed conflict; the desire of peace with social justice; and the need for a new social, economic, and political model and an

⁷⁹⁸ Marcha Patriótica, 'Lanzamiento del movimiento política Marcha Patriótica y constitución de su consejo patriótico nacional', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 10, Febrero – Marzo 2012, p. 3.

⁷⁹⁹ Marcha Patriótica, 'Lanzamiento del movimiento política Marcha Patriótica y constitución de su consejo patriótico nacional', p. 3.

integral agrarian reform.⁸⁰⁰ To these themes, the Patriotic March adds a nationalist tone, with references to the prominent figures of Colombian independence, an emphasis on sovereignty and self-determination, and a trans-Latin American dimension stressing the solidarity between people.⁸⁰¹ Stigmatised as being infiltrated by the FARC guerrillas, it has in this regard the ambition to represent a 'true alternative for democratic change',⁸⁰² in opposition to traditional political parties and elites, and defines itself as a 'setting where we build programmatic proposals leading to deep transformations that our country needs'.⁸⁰³ Along with the MP, which seeks to achieve political change, the ACVC has taken leading roles in two movements which have managed to establish official channels of negotiations with the government through the combination of strategies of war of movement and war of position. Both the MIA and the National Agrarian Summit were born out of nationwide strikes organised by peasant organisations all around the country in 2013 and 2014. While the former is exclusively composed of peasant organisations, the latter has seen the convergence of the most important social movements within Colombian society in an attempt to achieve unity. It gathers some of the organisations already mentioned, such as the Patriotic March, ANZORC, and the MIA, but also includes the other main peasant movement: Congreso de los Pueblos, the PCN, and a national coalition of indigenous communities, the Colombian National Indigenous Organisation (ONIC). In the call for its first rally, the National Agrarian Summit claimed to be the 'meeting point of distinct agrarian and popular sectors' for the 'construction of a single program through which we will design the mandate of our political and social action'.⁸⁰⁴ Focusing on peasants' demands, the recognition of peasants as political actors, and the transformation of the current economic model, the National Agrarian Summit has formulated a list of demands (*pliego de peticiones*), which builds on a list elaborated by the MIA in August 2013. The origin of these lists can even be traced back to the design of an Agrarian Alternative Law in 2011 by a coalition of peasant organisations in which the ACVC played a key role.⁸⁰⁵ More than a mere list of demands, it

⁸⁰⁰ Marcha Patriótica, 'Declaración Política', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 11, Mayo-Agosto 2012, p. 5.

⁸⁰¹ Marcha Patriótica, 'Declaración Política', p. 5.

⁸⁰² Marcha Patriótica, 'Lanzamiento del movimiento política Marcha Patriótica y constitución de su consejo patriótico nacional', p. 3.

⁸⁰³ Tierra, 'En la marcha nos encontramos tod@s', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 10. Febrero-Marzo 2012, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁴ Tierra, 'Convocatoria – Cumbre Nacional Agraria; Campesina, Etnica y popular', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 16, Enero-Marzo 2014, p. 5.

⁸⁰⁵ Agencia Prensa Rural, 'Ley agraria alterna desde las organizaciones campesinas', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 7, Septiembre 2011, p. 5.

actually formulates clear and concrete alternatives for the development of rural regions and the recognition of peasants' economic, social, and political rights. These lists are the main tools used by the MIA and the Cumbre in order to negotiate with the government. Indeed, the MIA managed to reach an agreement with the government in September 2013 regarding the establishment of a formal dialogue, both at the national level and at the regional level with the regional branches of the MIA. In addition, the Cumbre has also reached an agreement with the government for the creation of a single national roundtable of interlocution between the Cumbre and the government, thus replacing the regional and separate dialogues established with the organisations gathered in the Cumbre.⁸⁰⁶

Within these initiatives, organic intellectuals have played a key role in the mobilisation of such diverse social movements, the formulation of these lists of demands, and the connection of their struggles with the national issue that peace is. The meaning of the *Tierra* newspaper headline quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which claims that 'the peasant struggle is the struggle for peace', is developed by ANZORC as follows. The Peasant Reserve Zones National Association argues that

Organised peasant communities have developed initiatives aiming at the organisation of their territories, access to land, alternative development, cohabitation based on cooperation and solidarity, and have viable proposals for the regulation of the territory (...). Men and women peasants are full political actors, whom the state and other sectors of Colombian society are compelled to recognize, take into account and fully include if the structural roots of the armed conflict are not to be perpetuated.⁸⁰⁷

The link between peasants and peacebuilding could not be expressed more clearly than in this quotation. The key role of the peasant communities is based on their condition as victims of the armed conflict, and their central location, both geographical and political, within conflicts over land in Colombia. In this regard, the participation of peasant communities within the peace process between FARC and the government has to go much further than a 'mere applause or distant view in order for the causes at the origin of the conflict to disappear'.⁸⁰⁸ A deep reform of the economic structure, based on peasant communities needs and demands, should pave the way to a true democracy which would incorporate the real participation of communities.⁸⁰⁹ However, this will not happen if no pressure is put on

⁸⁰⁶ Ministerio del Interior, 'Decreto Numero 870 de 2014 Por el cual se regula un espacio de interlocución y participación con las organizaciones de la Cumbre Agraria, Campesina, Étnica y Popular que se denominara Mesa Única nacional' (Bogotá, Ministerio del Interior, 8 de Mayo 2014).

⁸⁰⁷ ANZORC, 'La unidad como la antithesis de la guerra territorial', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 14, Junio-Agosto 2013, p. 10.

⁸⁰⁸ ANZORC, 'La unidad como la antithesis de la guerra territorial', p. 10.

⁸⁰⁹ Agencia Prensa Rural, 'La lucha por la paz: tarea de todos', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 11, Mayo-Agosto 2012, p. 2.

the state. This is why the 'formation of a historical bloc based on the popular [social groups] is the unavoidable task of the moment'⁸¹⁰, task which the initiatives analysed above are trying to achieve. The ACVC, through two of its historical organic leaders, Andres Gil and Cesar Jerez, has been at the centre of all these initiatives, in what can be described as an attempt to form a new historical bloc with national-popular incentives.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter how the alliance-building efforts of the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC represent three different models of social transformation. Although based on the same principles of solidarity and dignity, the concrete forms taken by these principles in practice reveals different attitudes towards the state and neoliberalism. These attitudes are in turn reflected in different strategies of social transformation in order to challenge the structures supporting the armed conflict and eventually contribute to building peace at local and national level. As the organisers of alliance-building efforts and strategies, organic intellectuals have had a strong influence. Their role was key to explaining the failure of the ATCC to establish an alternative historical bloc, and the success of the CdPSJA and the ACVC in building two different alternative historical blocs by relying on two different strategies of social transformation. Organic intellectuals had a strong influence on the design of a clear and coherent common sense and political project capable of representing an alternative to the hegemonic historical bloc and in diffusing this common sense within civil society and political society. They have also been key in connecting many different and diverse struggles, and in linking peasant initiatives with peacebuilding at the national level.

I argue that the attitudes and strategies adopted by all three communities towards the state and political power are key to explaining their success. While the ATCC has used its development plans in order to both mobilise its social basis and involve state institutions in the implementation of these plans in an attempt to bring the state back to the Carare region, the CdPSJA and the ACVC have been much more radical in their attempts to challenge the state and neoliberalism. I have characterised the attitude of the former as a radical idealism, and of the latter as a radical pragmatism. The CdPSJA has prioritised the use and development of international networks in support of its project of self-autonomy, based on solidarity, the

⁸¹⁰ Agencia Prensa Rural, 'La lucha por la paz: tarea de todos', p. 2.

rupture of its relationships with the state, and the development of an alternative economy. This has enabled it to increase and preserve its autonomy with regard to the state and armed actors alike. But its radicalism has also allowed the CdPSJA to preserve its autonomy with regard to the very international actors it has received support from. The CdPSJA's leaders claim that the existence of their community is the proof that it is possible to build alternatives to the state and capitalism, and that the building and promotion of this alternative is their main contribution to peace. However, its radicalism also means that it is considerably isolated both in its regional setting and at the national level. In contrast, the ACVC has managed to gather extensive support at national level and build bridges between many different sectors of civil society, including non-peasant organisations. While remaining critical of the state and its legitimacy, it has engaged with and put pressure on state institutions by combining strategies of war of movement and war of position. It has finally positioned some of its leaders within key national social movements. This chapter shows that the ACVC has made the strongest claim in relation to its contribution to peacebuilding, and has truly managed to build an alternative historical bloc with national-popular incentives. As such, it is closest to a Gramscian understanding of counter-hegemony.

Both the pre-existing political culture and the influence and leadership of organic intellectuals help us understand why these three peasant communities adopted such different attitudes towards the state and neoliberalism, and designed such diverse strategies. However, different and efficient these three communities were in the making of alternative historical blocs, they all placed dignity at the centre of their initiatives. It is possible, however, to interrogate the relevance of such strategies in challenging the existing power relations which sustain the armed conflict and violence in Colombia. Whether these peasant initiatives will end up in reformism – being integrated within the state's narrative of 'territorial peace', which argues that grassroots communities should be the bedrock of the implementation of the peace agreement – or will manage to achieve structural change and shape the implementation of these agreements is what I discuss in the next chapter. I not only do so in the light of the analysis I carried out in the last three chapters on the new common sense developed by peasant communities in the midst of armed conflict, their ability to control their territory, and their success in building alternative historical blocs. I also discuss this question in light of the state's strategy for the implementation of the peace agreement signed with FARC in November 2016.

Chapter 6: Passive revolution or a new hegemony?

Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the main research question of this thesis: How does an analysis of civil local peace initiatives that resist power networks and structures responsible for prolonging conflict in Colombia contribute to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies? My assumption is that bringing about peace in the progressive meaning of the term will require a systemic change in Colombia, not just a re-accommodation of social relations that would only address direct violence and leave untouched the causes of structural violence. Asking such a question therefore directs attention to the contribution of peasant communities to challenging the political, economic, and social structures that are both at the origins and sustain the armed conflict. To conduct this enquiry, I analysed the making of a new common sense by peasant communities and how this new common sense allowed them to build their resistance in the midst of armed conflict. I then closely looked at their ability to assert their control over a territory. In particular, I argued that their position within society depended on this ability to control their territory. Finally, I analysed their efforts to build alternative historical blocs and link their initiatives to peacebuilding at the national level. The three case-study chapters have in this regard raised three specific questions, which I aim to develop in this chapter on the basis of my findings. Can the new institutions and common sense that peasant communities have developed positively influence the ideological context of the post-conflict setting in Colombia? What is the potential of the territorial political economy established by peasant communities for contributing to peacebuilding at the national level? Can peasant communities' attempts at building alternative historical blocs grounded in dignity contribute to challenge the social basis of the state and neoliberalism?

In this chapter, I argue that peasant communities' contribution to peacebuilding is likely to have the highest impact at local level through the diffusion of a new common sense, and through the promotion of a political economy addressing peasants' needs and guaranteeing their rights. This impact will be uneven though, depending on the strength of the alternative historical blocs developed by each community under study. Peasant communities are therefore likely to have an important role in supporting the implementation of the peace agreement between the government and FARC, even though there will be

contradictions and tensions between the government's and peasant's understanding of what a territorial peace means. This is where the models of social transformation promoted by each of the community under study come into play, as they are likely to affect the role that each community is willing to have in the implementation of the peace agreement. However, my general contention is that we are witnessing what Gramsci called a passive revolution.⁸¹¹ Systemic change in relation to land ownership will be achieved, in part because of the counter-hegemonic forces represented by peasant communities, who might achieve some degree of social and political autonomy at local level. But the overall change at national level will still work for the benefit of traditional Colombian elites and the maintenance of neoliberalism and capital accumulation. This holds even if we are witnessing a reorganisation of these elites, as the opposition between former President Alvaro Uribe and current President Juan Manuel Santos shows. In this regard, peasant communities' demands will be incorporated and peasants will be granted rights. These communities will be integrated within the new social and economic order that the state is trying to create as a result of the peace agreement with FARC, without challenging the power of existing economic and political elites and their dominant position within the economy and political society. For not succeeding in playing a decisive role within the latter two spheres at the national scale, peasant communities will become subaltern groups with rights within a reorganised and consolidated hegemony of the traditional dominant groups. Again, this process will be uneven and will be influenced by the stance adopted by each community under study towards the state and the economy. The ATCC is likely to lose even more influence and face co-optation by the state. The CdPSJA will keep preserving its autonomy and resisting the state policies and economic model, even though it faces isolation. Finally, the ACVC will continue to exert a strong influence at the national level, but will also be kept in check by the state hegemony.

In the first section of this chapter, I introduce the contemporary context of the peace negotiations and the final agreement reached in August 2016 between FARC and the government. In particular, I pay special attention to the government's narrative of 'territorial peace', which argues that rural communities will have to play a crucial role in the implementation of the agreements. With this contextual background in mind, I go back in the

⁸¹¹ Gramsci, A. *Selections*.

second section to the questions raised in the previous three chapters to provide conclusions to my research question about the role in building peace of the three peasant communities. In the final section of this chapter, I return to my theoretical framework in order to engage in a dialogue about one of the key issues raised throughout this thesis and which has also concerned the peacebuilding literature over the past 25 years. I refer here to the relationship between peace on one hand, and the state and the economy on the other. I do that by discussing the relevance of my theoretical framework in light of my research findings, and by contrasting Holloway's ideas about changing the world without taking power with Gramsci's political theory.⁸¹²

Hegemony and the Colombian peacebuilding process

Since September 2012, the Colombian government, led by the president Juan Manuel Santos, began a peace dialogue with the FARC. Ten years after the last attempt made by a Colombian government to sign a peace agreement with the FARC, few people believed they would be successful. But four years later, the President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, and Farc Commandant Timoleón Jiménez signed the final agreement on 26 September 2016. While this is a considerable and positive achievement, the argument I make in this section introduces a nuanced view of these agreements. In spite of clear differences in discourse, policies, and values with the former President Alvaro Uribe Velez, Juan Manuel Santos' efforts have to be understood as a different strategy to achieve the same objectives. The latter wants to achieve through consent what the former tried to achieve through coercion. I claim that the agreements have to be seen as an attempt to strengthen the hegemony of traditional Colombian elites and their neoliberal principles and policies on one hand, and to integrate subaltern groups and their demands within the ensemble of social relations. Juan Manuel Santos has understood that a peaceful Colombia is the best way to consolidate neoliberalism and strengthen the place of Colombia within the global economy. He has also understood that concessions had to be made in order to achieve that and include subaltern groups. The government's narrative based on the concept of territorial peace seeks exactly to do that. The High Commissioner for Peace, Sergio Jaramillo, explains:

What we need is to impose a logic of territorial inclusion and integration, based on a new alliance between the state and communities in order to build together 'institutionality' within the territory.

⁸¹² Holloway, J. *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, (London, Pluto Press, 2010)

'Institutionality' understood here again not only as the presence of state entities, but as the joint establishment of practices and norms which regulates public life and produces wellbeing.⁸¹³

What Jaramillo describes here is the development of a new common sense which aims to integrate both non-violent and violent resistance to the Colombian government's domination. What we are witnessing is an attempt to reorganise political, social, and cultural relations so that they conform to relations of production. The state has to be rethought and reshaped in order to satisfy the demands of a neoliberal economic order which should eventually rely on consent rather than coercion. I claim that the government's efforts to bring about peace will end up in a process of passive revolution.

Before exploring this concept of territorial peace in more detail, it is necessary to introduce the vision of the Colombian government set out in the 2014–2018 National Development Plan (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015). Indeed, the 2014–2018 development plan is closely linked to the peacebuilding efforts and negotiations carried out by the Colombian government with the FARC in Cuba. The plan states:

Both the materialisation of the eventual peace agreements and the building of foundations for a sustainable peace will be based on the policies and strategies that this National Development Plan introduce to the country for the next years, which will imply, obviously, efforts from the state but also from all Colombians. The National Development Plan is the product of the determination of the government to carry out the necessary reforms to consolidate peace and bring modernity to the country [...] Peace requires the presence of the state in all its forms, with roads, schools and hospitals, in every corner of Colombia, and also requires the consolidation of the social welfare state and the rule of law (estado social de derecho) enshrined in the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2015: 25).⁸¹⁴

As we can see from this, peacebuilding is closely linked to a statebuilding agenda, based on the concept of good governance and its associated principles, such as transparency, participation and the service of citizens, the fight against corruption, and effective public administration and service vocation.⁸¹⁵ By establishing a close connection between peacebuilding and statebuilding, the plan lays out a vision according to which peace can be brought about through the strengthening of state institutions' capacities and legitimacy. It is quite clear that the plan assumes that the state has the autonomy to implement the policies set out in the plan, and overall reduce peacebuilding to technical measures and policies. This statebuilding agenda in turn depends on policies that would strengthen the presence of the

⁸¹³ Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace', Speech given at Harvard University. 13 March 2013.

⁸¹⁴ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018, Todos por un Nuevo país', Tomo 1 (Bogotá, DNP, 2015) p. 25.

⁸¹⁵ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', p. 571.

state all over the national territory, and which does not 'bring the state to the territories' but builds the state and its legitimacy 'from and for the territories'.⁸¹⁶ The four pillars of the government's vision for a Colombia in peace are a rights approach; a territorial approach; a participation approach; and the building of trust amongst citizens, and between citizens and the state.⁸¹⁷ At the centre of the vision of the Colombian government for a peaceful Colombia lies the need to put an end to the armed conflict before building peace, to guarantee rights and strengthen institutions from a territorial perspective, thus acknowledging that the conflict has had a differentiated impact on each region, and had the highest impact in rural areas.⁸¹⁸

As part of an attempt to gain wide international support for the peace process, the National Development Plan incorporates most of the international norms and standards promoted by international institutions such as UN agencies and the World Bank. It also outlines on paper a progressive and holistic vision for a post-conflict Colombia which encompasses the most recent literature on peacebuilding and statebuilding. For instance, the plan emphasises the importance of citizen and civil society participation; the collective construction of peace from the bottom up; the need for a comprehensive rural development based on an integral rural reform; and a spatial and differentiated approach to the design and implementation of public policies.⁸¹⁹ In particular, the participation approach

...implies moving from a conception of citizenship as recipient of state actions, and whose participation barely limits itself to electoral processes, to a citizenship that prioritises, defines, and implements the actions in which it is directly involved, and contributes to the very construction of the state through these actions.⁸²⁰

This points to a collective peacebuilding process based on a rights-based approach

...that involves guaranteeing fundamental rights of all citizens, especially those who have seen their rights restricted by the armed conflict, and transforming the current illegality in several regions of the country through institutions that deliver guarantees and opportunities for the effective realization of rights.⁸²¹

All these concepts have been viewed favourably by peacebuilding scholars and practitioners alike. Through the use of this progressive vision and narrative, the Santos government has been able to gather wide support from the international community around

⁸¹⁶ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', p. 28.

⁸¹⁷ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', p. 44.

⁸¹⁸ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', p. 41.

⁸¹⁹ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', pp. 35-53.

⁸²⁰ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', pp. 44-45.

⁸²¹ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 'Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018', p. 42.

the peace process with the FARC. The concept of territorial peace is in a way the bedrock of this progressive vision, and is meant to be the overarching strategic concept guiding decision making, policies, and strategies for the post-conflict setting. Jaramillo argues that a territorial approach must complement a rights-based approach to peacebuilding.⁸²² This is because the conflict has had a differentiated impact on every region, both qualitatively and quantitatively. This is also motivated by the need to mobilise the population in rural areas and regions around peace.⁸²³ The concept of territorial peace developed by the Colombian government relies on three main components. First of all, a new playing field with institutions that will guarantee the rights of all Colombians all over the country. Second, civil and social dynamics putting emphasis on participation. And finally, a new alliance between the state and communities that avoids both the centralist state model and the logic of fragmentation.⁸²⁴ Institutions, participation, and decentralisation are thus the three pillars of the concept of territorial peace. These three pillars are to be fulfilled through 'bottom-up participatory planning processes in each region', and a 'participatory planning campaign in which both public authorities and local communities map the characteristics and needs of each territory, identify an adequate response, and jointly and methodically build plans that will lead to the transformation of those regions'.⁸²⁵ For Jaramillo, these processes must lead to a 'new and inclusive model of institutional strengthening in the regions' and the establishment of 'a logic of inclusion and regional integration, based on a new alliance between the state and communities'. Within this new alliance, communities must be 'active designers and not only recipients of state programmes', so that state legitimacy is strengthened and the mistrust between state and communities overcome.⁸²⁶ According to an official of the office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the government has to recognise that there are highly valuable experiences of peacebuilding and resistance in the midst of armed conflict in Colombia. The official argued that state policies have to start from their initiatives, but that the state has to give coherence to community initiatives. These cannot be entirely autonomous because

⁸²² Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace'.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁴ González, F.E. et al. (eds.) 'Estrategias para la construcción de paz territorial en Colombia. Elementos para la discusión', documentos ocasionales n° 79 (Bogotá, CINEP y PPP, 2015) p. 11; Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace'.

⁸²⁵ Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace'.

⁸²⁶ Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace'.

otherwise what we will get is a fragmented state.⁸²⁷ Finally, territorial peace is intimately linked to the resolution of rural problems and issues.⁸²⁸

The territorial peace approach has been integrated into the final agreements signed with the FARC on 28 August 2016 in Havana, in particular within the first point of the agreements about the integral rural reform (Reforma Rural Integral in Spanish – RRI).⁸²⁹ It is argued that the latter conceives of the rural territory as

...a socio-historical setting with social and cultural diversity, within which communities – men and women – have a prominent role in the definition of the improvement of their life conditions and in the definition of the development of the country within a vision of rural-urban integration.⁸³⁰

The agreements about the integral rural reform also recognise the ‘fundamental role played by peasant, family-based, and community-based economy in the development of rural areas’ (el campo). They also highlight the contribution of this economy to ‘the eradication of hunger, the creation of employments and incomes, the dignification and formalisation of labour, the production of food, and in general, the development of the nation, in coexistence and complementary articulation with other forms of rural production’.⁸³¹ The participation of rural communities is therefore instrumental to the structural transformation of rural areas that the National Development Plan and these agreements seek to achieve. In this regard, the agreement about the integral rural reform outlines the main elements of Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial – PDET) and National Plans for the Integral Rural Reform.⁸³²

As I have shown throughout this thesis, the everyday encounters between the state and peasant communities are far from reflecting this narrative, even since it was first formulated in 2013. Above all, the interviews I conducted with local state and army officials in 2014 show that the ‘territorial peace’ narrative has not yet reached local municipalities and institutions⁸³³. The relationship between the peasant communities under study on one hand, and local authorities on the other still very much remain one of over confrontation or soft

⁸²⁷ Government#6, Alto Comisionado para la Paz, Bogotá, 25 June 2014

⁸²⁸ Departamento Nacional de Planeación, ‘Plan de desarrollo 2014-2018’, p. 28; Jaramillo, S. ‘Territorial Peace’.

⁸²⁹ Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), ‘Acuerdo final’, p. 4.

⁸³⁰ Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), ‘Acuerdo final’, p. 8.

⁸³¹ Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), ‘Acuerdo final’, p. 9.

⁸³² Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), ‘Acuerdo final’, pp. 17-29.

⁸³³

opposition to say the least. In addition, their attitudes and perceptions toward the peace process are filled with scepticism.⁸³⁴ The existing mistrust between communities and the state will in fact be one of the main challenges faced by national and local authorities once the time has come to implement and materialise the 'territorial peace' narrative. The main contacts with the state happen through the army. The presence of paramilitary groups and the environmental threats posed by economic projects aimed at extracting natural resources do not help to increase trust in the state. However, some differences exist between the three peasant communities under study. While the CdPSJA is highly sceptical and does not believe that the peace agreement will change anything on the ground,⁸³⁵ the ACVC and the ATCC have been supportive of the peace dialogues between the state and the FARC. The news agency Prensa Rural, run by the ACVC, calls the peace agreement signed in September a 'political success', and add that they might be the most important agreements in the recent political history of Colombia.⁸³⁶ It goes on to say that the peace agreement 'represent a decisive moment for the aim to boost from below a peace movement that gather the legacy of resistance to war'.⁸³⁷ These are the reasons why the ACVC supported the 'yes' answer to the referendum held by the government on 2 October 2016. Similarly, ANZORC, whose director is a member of the ACVC, argues that the peace agreement represents an opportunity to 'lay the foundations of a political, economic and social base to start the peacebuilding process'.⁸³⁸ The question I explore in the rest of this chapter deals with the role of peasant communities within this post-conflict setting and their contribution to peacebuilding. To do so, I base my analysis on the preliminary findings exposed in the three previous chapters of this thesis. I first reflect on the common sense promoted by the three peasant communities under study and its role in the construction of a new political subject entitled with rights. I then deal with the extent to which the peasant-based political economy developed by peasant communities is able to have an impact within the post-conflict setting and vision laid out by the state. Finally, I ask whether the alternative historical blocs and the three different attitudes identified in Chapter 4 will be able to challenge the social basis of the state and the neoliberal

⁸³⁴ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*.

⁸³⁵ Burnyeat, G. *Chocolate y Política*; Burnyeat, G. 'Colombia: Peace, the Peace Community and social reconciliation', *Latin America Bureau*, 22 October 2015 [BLOG], Available at: <https://lab.org.uk/colombia-peace-the-peace-community-and-social-reconciliation/> (23 May 2017).

⁸³⁶ Agencia Prensa Rural, '¡Nuestro Si!', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 22, Agosto-Septiembre 2016, p. 2.

⁸³⁷ Agencia Prensa Rural, '¡Nuestro Si!'.

⁸³⁸ ANZORC, 'Nueva institucionalidad, financiación e implementación para los Acuerdos de Paz', *Tierra* (Barrancabermeja), n° 22, Agosto-Septiembre 2016, p. 12.

economic interests it promotes. Using Gramsci's political theory, I argue that a passive revolution is the most likely outcome of the peacebuilding process initiated by the government.

Peasant communities, territorial peace, and the post-conflict setting

Common sense and the construction of a new political subject entitled with rights for the post-conflict setting

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I argued that the critical consciousness developed by members of peasant communities represents a break from both the traditional dominant ideologies, and the ideologies imposed by armed actors, be they paramilitary groups or guerrillas. I found that the process through which peasant communities' members lost fear was instrumental in their capacity to translate their new critical consciousness into practice. The emergence of a particular political consciousness, linked to a conception of the world that goes beyond the common sense imposed upon subaltern groups by ruling elites, and the loss of fear interact with each other from the birth of peasant communities until today. While this new common sense has been successful in organising resistance in the midst of armed conflict, it is legitimate to ask whether it can prove a useful tool for the post-conflict setting and the peacebuilding process that will follow the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP.

The principles underlying peasant communities' critical consciousness have proved useful to manage the identification problem in civil wars (Kalyvas, 2006). Peasant communities have managed to establish a clear distinction between civilians and armed actors based on the principles of non-violence, neutrality, and human rights. They have also managed to keep civilians out of the conflict by offering an alternative to either joining one of the armed actors or creating a new armed group. One of the main challenges that peasant communities face is to maintain these norms and the collective support they receive within a post-conflict setting. Indeed, the development of these norms and the collective dynamics they reflect were intimately tied to a context of extreme violence. It is already possible to observe how respect for these norms is changing as the context evolves. For instance, in the case of the ATCC, adhesion to the principles of the association has become looser and looser as violence has changed and the association has lost its institutional strength. In the case of

the CdPSJA, an old member of the community finally decided to accept the government's financial compensation as part of the 2011 Victim Law. This led him to leave the community, as one of its principles is the refusal of any government initiative to compensate victims of the conflict on an individual basis. They insist on the fact that the compensation of victims should be collective rather than individual. This short example also illustrates that the state's strategies are changing. As the intensity of the armed conflict decreases, these strategies tend to rely more on consent rather than coercion. This poses a clear risk for the social fabric of peasant communities. The CdPSJA has answered these changes by issuing new collective norms, as one of the leaders of the community explains. Asked how the community was dealing with the new laws passed by the Santos Government, such as the Victim and Land Law, he argued:

[...] yes, there has been some changes that maybe since 2005 we had to issue new rules, as the one [related to] coca crops, the one [related to] victims, land compensation. I think that as all these damaging investments arise, toward this region, above all toward this community, well I think that as community we have created very different strategies as well in order to be able to face these investments that are taking place.⁸³⁹

However, other members of the CdPSJA insisted that these laws are not real changes but only 'words'⁸⁴⁰ or 'surface' changes.⁸⁴¹ For one of them, the law for the compensation of victims seeks to 'mercantilise victims, to convert them in merchandise'. It aims to 'to give a few millions to families in order to silence them and clear up the memories of victims'. He added that these are 'solutions that are clearly understood as such by the community, that they are not solutions and that (...) it does not have to adapt to new situations because there is no real new situation.'⁸⁴² Although I did not explicitly ask what the members of the CdPSJA thought about the concept of territorial peace, I believe the answer would have followed the same line of argument. This shows that trust between the state and communities will be a very important issue in the post-conflict setting.

What is interesting in this discussion is that the autonomy of peasant communities and the collective political subject they are trying to develop will be at stake in the post-conflict setting. Whilst the principle of non-violence can easily be transformed into a norm for the post-conflict setting and the reintegration of illegal combatants for instance, the

⁸³⁹ CdP#11.

⁸⁴⁰ CdP#9.

⁸⁴¹ Church#1.

⁸⁴² Church#1.

principle of neutrality is likely to be challenged by state authorities and institutions. The same official of the office of the High Commissioner for Peace already mentioned argued that neutrality can be understood in a context of armed conflict, but that in a post-conflict setting there has to be trust between the state and the communities. For the peacebuilding process, an alliance between state and communities has to be created.⁸⁴³ Implicit in what the official said is that trust in the state and the neutrality principle are opposed to each other. The concept of territorial peace does not contemplate the possibility of peasant communities to remain as autonomous as they have been so far by default. The new alliance between state and communities promoted by the concept of territorial peace implies 'a logic of inclusion and regional integration' and 'the joint development of practices and standards that regulate public life and produce wellbeing'.⁸⁴⁴ It remains unclear what these practices and standards should be according to the government though.

Another example that gives a good idea of the debate surrounding the autonomy of peasant communities during the post-conflict setting comes from the peace negotiations between the government and the FARC in Havana. The first agreement, about Integral Rural Reform, makes explicit reference to ZRCs and their potential for building peace.⁸⁴⁵ It is argued that the 'recognition and support of Peasant Reserve Zones and other forms of supportive community involvement' are key elements to facilitate the role of peasants in structural transformation of rural areas and the closure of the agricultural frontier.⁸⁴⁶ However, before the inclusion of the ZRC in the final agreements, a polemic debate took place not only between the FARC and the government but in civil society as well. While the FARC wanted to include the creation of 59 ZRCs as part of the agreements and grant them the right to political autonomy, self-management and administrative justice, the government argued it could not accept the creation of an independent republic, reference to the peasant community created in Marquetalia at the beginning of the 1960s, and which led to the creation of the FARC in the

⁸⁴³ Government#1, Bogotá, 14 June 2015.

⁸⁴⁴ Jaramillo, S. 'Territorial Peace'.

⁸⁴⁵ Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 'Acuerdo final', p. 9.

⁸⁴⁶ Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 'Acuerdo final', p. 9.

1960s.⁸⁴⁷ As to peasants themselves, they tried not to be assimilated with the FARC's proposal or the stigmatisation spread by public statements from state officials.⁸⁴⁸

One of the main challenges facing Colombian society in the post-conflict setting is the necessity to reinstate or establish peaceful social relationships and citizen coexistence, and to strengthen institutions of a democratic character in war-torn regions. Pearce has argued that initiatives led by social organisations, communities, and NGOs in both urban and rural spaces in Colombia suggest that they are more than mere resistance.⁸⁴⁹ She affirms that we could recognise them 'as an exercise in citizenship building given that they also claim rights'.⁸⁵⁰ Pearce goes on to explain that 'this emergence of subjects of rights' can be assimilated to what citizenship is, 'especially if we emphasise the fact that these type of activities are carried out in the midst of violence'. In this regard, 'they open spaces, make visible hidden violence and delegitimise illegal violence'.⁸⁵¹ While I agree with Pearce's argument in principle, more work is required for this potential to lead to systematic change. This resistance has to be unified by a (counter-)hegemonic actor in order not to end being co-opted by the state. It remains to be seen whether peasant communities can be the binding actor that would gather and cohere the many resistances led by different social groups in Colombia in the post-conflict setting. Peasant communities have to win positions within both civil society and political society to spread their new critical consciousness to these other groups, especially in urban settings. This implies that peasant communities also adapt their new critical consciousness so that it can represent the interests of other social groups that resist the state and the impact of neoliberalism. Gramsci reminds us throughout his notes that this is not only a political or economic task. It is also a deeply cultural endeavour, as it implies making connections between different conceptions of the world and challenging pre-conceived ideas about peasants and the roots of the conflict.⁸⁵² In this regard, the critical consciousness born out of peasant communities' resistance is closely tied to a peasant

⁸⁴⁷ Bermúdez Liévano, A. 'Las zonas de reserva campesina desafían al Gobierno', La Silla Vacía (Bogotá), 21 de Septiembre 2014. Available at: <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/las-zonas-de-reserva-campesinas-desafian-al-gobierno-48634> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁸⁴⁸ Vélez, J. 'Zonas de reserva campesina: entre el estigma y la oportunidad', La Silla Vacía (Bogotá), 21 de Diciembre 2016. Available at: <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/zonas-de-reserva-campesina-entre-el-estigma-y-la-oportunidad-59199> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

⁸⁴⁹ Pearce, J. 'Retos para la construcción de ciudadanía en situaciones de conflicto', in *Hacia la Reconstrucción del País: Desarrollo, Política y Territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado*, edited by González F. E. (Bogotá, Cinep-Odecofi, 2008) pp. 324-329.

⁸⁵⁰ Pearce, J. 'Retos', p. 328.

⁸⁵¹ Pearce, J. 'Retos', p. 328.

⁸⁵² Gramsci, A. *Selections*.

identity and culture. In addition, as my analysis shows, under the same principles adopted by peasant communities lie very different attitudes to the state, the economy, and social change. But above all, peasant communities also have to appeal to urban middle class populations to further spread their critical consciousness within civil society. This middle class has always lived on the periphery of armed conflict, even though it has also been the victim of violence caused by guerrillas, paramilitary groups, or the state. It has also supported the state and the traditional political parties. My analysis, backed by Gramsci's political theory, suggests that organic intellectuals will be key to such an endeavour, as they will also be in adapting peasant communities' critical consciousness to the government's narrative of territorial peace and the new context that is emerging after the peace agreement. So far, while peasant communities have been quite successful at spreading their critical consciousness throughout civil society at the regional and international levels, their initiatives have been less successful at the national level. Neither have they managed to spread this critical consciousness throughout mainstream political society. Only a handful of members of parliament, such as Ivan Cepeda or Alirio Uribe from the Polo Democrático political party, have tried to represent their interests. As a result, their initiatives have not been translated into political representation. This is above all true in the case of the CdPSJA and the ATCC, as the ACVC has managed to tie its initiatives to national political movements and gain key positions within these movements, as I have shown in Chapter 4.

Finally, the human rights discourse adopted by peasant communities as part of their critical consciousness could be considered as a universal basis to spread this very same consciousness. But it does not provide the necessary ground to allow peasant communities to achieve structural change within the post-conflict setting. In many other post-conflicts settings, a human rights discourse has merely created empty rights and the shell of state institutions.⁸⁵³ A human rights discourse might achieve surface changes and light reforms, but does not challenge the social basis of state power and its neoliberal policies. In fact, any attempt that merely asks the state to protect rights will end up in reformism. For Gramsci, subaltern groups have to go beyond their local settings and identify as subaltern groups to gain dominant positions within society and eventually become state. Most human rights are already enshrined in the Colombian Constitution of 1991, which is considered progressive. In

⁸⁵³ Richmond, O.P. 'Becoming Liberal'.

this regard, dignity proves a more radical and solid ground on which to develop counter-hegemonic alternatives and promote a political economy based on control over a territory. Peasant rights and their dignity need to be anchored in the land in order not to be empty rights.

I now turn to the role of space within the political economy promoted by peasant communities in the post-conflict setting.

Space, a peasant-based political economy, and the post-conflict setting

In the third chapter of this thesis, I showed how peasant communities managed to establish a certain control over their territory and developed a political economy based on this very territory. I argued that this control over a territory was key to their ability to challenge the power of illegal armed actors, the state, and neoliberal economic projects. I showed that such control depends on how well peasant communities move between scales, mobilise networks, and fill their territory with places. This ability to produce autonomous spaces is instrumental in their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding and the post-conflict setting in relation to challenges at regional and national scale. In this regard, several authors have already made the case that a peasant economy is key to the development of rural areas and represents a real alternative to the neoliberal political economy promoted by the state.⁸⁵⁴ Based on a very specific representation of the territory, peasant communities promote a political economy that does not contribute to violence; does not fuel the armed conflict; provides concrete and viable solutions to problems faced by peasants; and forms the basis of peaceful social relations in line with the cultural, economic, and social needs of the population. My point is not to add to this argument. Rather, what my analysis has demonstrated is how important it is for peasant communities to establish some kind of control over space in order to be able to develop such a peasant-based political economy and challenge state power. This control over their territory provides them with a material basis on which to deploy and sustain their critical consciousness.

⁸⁵⁴ Reyes Bohorquez, A. 'Las zonas de reserva'; Chaparro Garcia, W.A. *Las zonas de reserva campesina.*; Estrada Alvarez, J. (ed.) *Territorios Campesinos.*; González, F.E. et al. (eds.) 'Estrategias'; Molina Portuguese, A.L. 'La zona de reserva campesina del valle del río Cimitarra : un ejercicio inconcluso de participación ciudadana y manejo colectivo del territorio', *Cuadernos de geografía*, 20:2 (2011) pp. 21–33; Ortiz, C. et al. *Zonas de reserva campesina*; Perfetti, J.J. et al. *Políticas para el desarrollo de la agricultura en Colombia*, (Bogotá, Fedesarrollo, Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia (SAC), Incoder, Finagro, Banco Agrario, 2013).

To illustrate this point, it is first useful to reflect on the reasons why the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC have not had the same degree of success in controlling their territory. How can the difference in success of the initiatives led by the CdPSJA and the ACVC on one hand, and the ATCC on the other, be explained? My analysis suggests that the ATCC, even though it did manage to achieve some kind of protection for its members between 1987 and 2000, has not been successful in protecting its territory, or sphere of influence. Its control was over people's behaviour and not over a territory. Even when the ATCC was socially strong in the years following its creation, it has never prohibited armed actors from moving around or passing through its territory.⁸⁵⁵ Similarly, the ATCC was not able to prevent new populations from migrating to its sphere of influence at the beginning of the 2000s. These new inhabitants were less committed to the principle of non-violence and non-cooperation with armed actors than the founding members of the ATCC. They did not feel the need to turn to the ATCC in order to settle conflicts and also began to grow coca.⁸⁵⁶ Even though it remains precarious in some ways, the stronger 'organic' connection established with their territories by the CdPSJA and the ACVC through the use of scales, networks, and places, and their higher capacity to protect these territories, mean that they are less dependent on the internal strength and cohesion of their organisations and communities. In fact, control over space reinforces their ability to strengthen their internal cohesion and social fabric, which in turn allows them to better protect, appropriate, and produce in their territory. Social relations and spatial dynamics mutually constitute and reinforce each other here. On the contrary, given that the ATCC has not achieved the same level of territorial control, it is highly dependent on its internal strength and cohesion for the control of its sphere of influence.

The use of strategies of war of position by peasant communities in the midst of armed conflict appears in contradiction with the conditions that make a war of position possible according to Gramsci. As I have shown in Chapter 1, it is the nature of political power which ensures the possibility for a war of position to be successful. A war of position is possible in contexts in which there is a modern state and where the predominance of the realm of politics over military dynamics is guaranteed.⁸⁵⁷ Although the Colombian state is still in formation and its presence is uneven,⁸⁵⁸ it can be considered a modern state. The state's authority and,

⁸⁵⁵ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians', p. 363.

⁸⁵⁶ Kaplan, O. 'Protecting civilians', p. 365.

⁸⁵⁷ Gramsci, A. *Selections*, p. 232.

⁸⁵⁸ González, F.E. et al. *Violencia política.*; González, F.E. *Poder.*

to a lesser extent, its legitimacy are well established in urban areas, where consent prevails. In addition, the guerrillas' struggle has shown that a war of manoeuvre could not work in Colombia. But at the time when the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC were born, military dynamics and social orders imposed by force were the norm in rural areas, where coercion prevailed and still prevails to some extent. In spite of this, peasant communities managed to develop political projects and faced the armed actors' strategies through non-violent means. This shows that they were successful in reinstating the political process in order to conduct a counter-hegemonic struggle. My analysis suggests that it is by establishing a control over space that peasant communities succeeded in keeping this political process open and sustain it, thanks to the waging of a war of position making use of scales, networks, and places. This also ensured that peasant communities' struggle was conducted on the very terrain which ensures the dominance of armed actors, the ruling class, and the state, namely territorial control and the ownership of land.

It logically follows that organisation and representation alone then do not constitute sufficient grounds to transform social relations in the case of peasant communities' struggle. Control over space enables these communities to transform the relationships of subordinations that are at the origins of their marginalisation within society, and to ground their rights in a material basis. More importantly, this control over space allows peasant communities to exercise a decisive function within the economy, at least at the local and regional level. By regaining control over the mode of production and putting it at the service of peasant needs, the CdPSJA and the ACVC lead successful and sustainable economic projects, such as those I mentioned in Chapter 3. The collaboration between the British-based company Lush and the CdPSJA and the company created by the ACVC to sell buffalo-based products, are representative of these projects. The CdPSJA and the ACVC managed to position these successful projects as real alternatives for the development of rural areas and peasant communities that can be replicated. In this regard, the ACVC donated seven buffalos to another peasant-based organisation called ASCAMCAT, which is located in the Norte de Santander Department. These initiatives also contribute to building bridges between rural and urban areas, in the case of the ACVC, and between peasants' struggle for the respect of human rights and European citizens, in the case of the CdPSJA. The cocoa produced by the CdPSJA is sold in Lush's shops throughout Europe, while the buffalo-based products of the ACVC are sold in several cities in Colombia. These projects have come to embody the vision

that these communities have for building peace in Colombia, and they help spread their values throughout civil society. They also reflect and symbolise the intellectual and moral reforms led by peasant communities, a reform which Gramsci considers key for the formation of a national-popular will and a new historical bloc. In this regard, these projects establish a link between the political and cultural realm of everyday life and the struggles for peace within the national-popular realm. Most importantly, they provide a vision of how space should be organised according to a peasant-based mode of production that is coherent with the social, cultural, and political needs of peasants. The territory is the basis of this political economy, and the strategies of protection, appropriation, and production employed by the CdPSJA and the ACVC enabled its development.

The logical conclusion of my analysis is that the degree to which peasant communities managed to establish some kind of control over space will be key in dealing with the territorial peace discourse developed by the state as the basis of the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC. Only if peasant communities manage to preserve this control over space will they be able to avoid co-optation by the state within the new alliance between the state and communities that the concept of territorial peace envisages. Otherwise, the concept of territorial peace will only serve as a tool for the discursive inclusion of subaltern groups within society. It will add to the previous technical development initiatives that failed to bring about real changes in the everyday lives of communities and granted them with empty rights. Although Jaramillo, the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace, affirms that the territorial peace concept will put an end to what he calls the 'incredulity' problem,⁸⁵⁹ symbolising the failure of the state to implement development programmes in rural areas. But his discourse and the concept of territorial peace still present a very liberal vision of a society that emphasises political and constitutional rights to the detriment of social, economic, and cultural rights. In my view, this discourse does not question the economic model, which is at the root of Colombia's conflict,⁸⁶⁰ but aims to establish state-society relations in line with this model. In addition, the mission of the newly created Agency for the Renovation of the Territory⁸⁶¹ (Agencia de Renovación del Territorio – ART) gives rise to concerns that its programmes will only repeat the failure of previous development

⁸⁵⁹ Jaramillo, S. Speech given by the High Commissioner for Peace on the concept of territorial Peace at 'Política de paz y reconciliación: 20 años de experiencia'. 11 June 2014.

⁸⁶⁰ Uribe López, M. *La nación vetada*.

⁸⁶¹ The Agency was created through Decree 2366 of 2015.

programmes such as the PNR, the Funds for the Reconstruction and Social Development of the Coffee Axis (Fondo para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Social del Eje Cafetero – FOREC), or Colombia Humanitaria. ART is supposed to design and implement the measures and programmes that were broadly sketched out in the Peace agreement as part of the Development Plans with a Territorial Approach (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (PDET)), whose objective is to bring about the structural transformation of rural areas already mentioned above.⁸⁶² The rather technical discourse used in the decree creating ART defines the mission of an entity that will bring development to rural areas from above, instead of strengthening local capacities, be they part of civil society or regional authorities.⁸⁶³ This is why the spatial and territorial dimension of peasant communities' struggle is so important, with its potential to challenge the assumptions of the government's vision of a territorial peace and question the government's development model. In addition to being critical in facing post-conflict violence, which is already targeting community leaders and left-wing activists,⁸⁶⁴ establishing control over space is the only way for peasant communities to challenge the state's development model at its roots, which are the use and exploitation of the territory.

However, my analysis suggests that this control over space needs to be backed by a solid alternative historical bloc representing the interests of peasant communities and other progressive sectors of society, if it is to challenge state power at national level. Otherwise, these alternatives are likely to be absorbed by neoliberal policies and incorporated within a capitalist system favouring individual rights, international investments, and the extraction of natural resources. The capacity of capitalism and neoliberalism to accommodate different spaces linked to a peasant-based economy and different modes of production is not to be underestimated. Peasants' contribution to peacebuilding will therefore very likely be limited to the local or regional levels at best. To overcome this localism and particularism, the three

⁸⁶² Gobierno de Colombia and Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 'Acuerdo final', p 21.

⁸⁶³ Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 'Decreto 2366 del 2015 por el cual se crea la Agencia de Renovación Territorial (ART), se determina su objeto y su estructura' (Bogotá, Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2015).

⁸⁶⁴ Miroff, M. 'A worrisome number for Colombia's peace prospect', *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), 2 March 2017, Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/03/02/a-worrisome-number-for-colombias-peace-prospects/?utm_term=.b46c022dbb65 (Accessed 25 May 2017); Miroff, M. 'The frightening issue that could destroy Colombia's peace deal', *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), 3 January 2017. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-americas/the-frightening-issue-that-could-destroy-colombias-peace-deal/2017/01/02/3e0a7fec-c304-11e6-92e8-c07f4f671da4_story.html?utm_term=.22372b507894 (Accessed 25 May 2017).

peasant communities under study have extended their control over space and built alternative historical blocs.

Alternative historical blocs and the challenge of state power: sustainable counter-hegemonic forces or passive revolution?

In the previous chapter, I analysed peasant communities' attempts at developing alternative historical blocs. However different and efficient these three communities were in the making of alternative historical blocs, they all placed dignity at the centre of their initiatives. Dignity appears as the common material and ideational basis of the alternative historical blocs led by the three peasant communities in their attempts to build a sustainable peace in Colombia. This, in my view, is one of the key dimensions of these peasant communities' narrative about their contribution to peacebuilding at national level in relation to the implementation of the agreements between the FARC and the government. I have shown how, despite this common ground, the efforts led by the CdPSJA, the ACVC, and the ATCC represented three different models of social transformation. Whilst the CdPSJA promotes a model of self-autonomy that rejects both the State and capitalism, the ACVC favours confrontational, power-seeking strategies, and the ATCC adopted a liberal stance seeking to bring the state back in. I argued that the success of these initiatives was not only related to their internal cohesion and strengths but also to the attitudes adopted by peasant communities towards the state, political power, and the market. My claim is that these different attitudes, strategies, and historical blocs have implications regarding their potential to bring about social change at national level. That said, I conclude by arguing that the most likely outcome of the peace communities' attempts to make alternative historical blocs is that they will be absorbed within existing political structures. In not managing to be the basis of a new national-popular common sense and historical bloc, transform its struggles into political representation, and exert key positions in the economy, peasant communities' initiatives run the risk of being co-opted and integrated within the government's post-conflict strategy of territorial peace.

While the ATCC has used its development plans to both mobilise its social basis and involve state institutions in the implementation of these plans in an attempt to bring the state back in the Carare region, the CdPSJA and the ACVC have been much more radical in their attempts to challenge the state and neoliberalism. I have characterised the attitude of the CdPSJA as a radical idealism, and the one of the ACVC as a radical pragmatism. The CdPSJA

has focused on the use and development of international networks in support of its project of self-autonomy, based on solidarity, the rupture of its relationships with the state, and the development of an alternative economy in rupture with the capitalist system. This has enabled it to strengthen and preserve its autonomy regarding the state and armed actors. But its radicalism has also allowed it to preserve its autonomy with regard to the very international actors it has received support from. The CdPSJA's leaders claim that the existence of their community is proof that it is possible to build alternatives to the state and capitalism, and that the building and promotion of this alternative within their local setting is their main contribution to peace. However, the community's radicalism also means that it is considerably isolated both in its regional setting and at national level. In contrast, my analysis showed that within the three peasant communities under study, the better placed to challenge the state and its neoliberal policies is the ACVC. By relying on the legal framework of the peasant reserve zone, which removes the land from the economic market and guarantees peasants' individual rights to the land through the Family Farming Unit (Unidad Agrícola Familiar – UAF), the ACVC is able to develop sustainable alternatives to neoliberal policies. It has managed to gather extensive support at national level within many different sectors of civil society, including non-peasant organisations. While remaining critical of the state and its legitimacy, it has engaged with and put pressure on its institutions by combining strategies of war of movement and war of position. Finally, the ACVC has positioned some of its leaders within key national social movements. In my opinion, the ACVC has made the strongest claim in relation to its contribution to peacebuilding, and has truly managed to build an alternative historical bloc with a national-popular dimension. As such, it is closest to a Gramscian understanding of counter-hegemony.

The possibility for peasant communities to mould the government's territorial peace discourse to their needs depends on their capacity to form such a coherent alternative historical bloc with national-popular incentives. That implies the development of a new common sense that would go beyond peasants' corporate needs and attract other sectors of society. It also implies the gaining of positions within political society and the acquisition of a dominant role within the economy. This does not go without challenges. For instance, if the emphasis on rights and multiculturalism in Colombia has proven useful to guarantee the rights of each ethnic group in a separate way, it poses a risk to the relationship between indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant communities. Whilst indigenous communities' land

is protected by the existence of reserves, and the collective rights of Afro-Colombian people over their territories are guaranteed by the Law 70 of 1993, the collective rights of peasants over the land is not guaranteed in any way. Indeed, although the concept of ZRCs favours peasants' individual rights to own a piece of land and regulate the size of rural ownership, it does not provide peasants with the same collective rights over the land as indigenous and Afro-Colombian people have. This is partly because peasants are not recognised as an ethnic group as such. But most importantly, many communities are competing for the recognition of their territorial claims over land in several Colombian departments. These territorial claims, added to the agrarian sectors' need for land, to rural poverty, and to unequal access to land between indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant communities, are producing breeding grounds for conflicts and tensions in rural areas.⁸⁶⁵ In this regard, of the three peasant communities under study, I argue that the ACVC has made the most convincing attempt to reconcile communities' interests and develop the common ground of an alternative historical bloc with national-popular incentives. This was well illustrated by the organisation in August 2011 at the National Meeting of Peasant, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Communities for the Peace of Colombia. The role played by the ACVC in the National Agrarian Summit also demonstrates its capacity to gather and cohere many different sectors of society (Chapter 4). The ACVC is clearly in a position to reach out to other ethnic communities and social groups.

In my view, the ACVC was encouraged to launch these initiatives thanks to its attitude towards political power, the state, and how to bring about social change. Its radical pragmatism led the ACVC to challenge the state while still engaging with its institutions. It also pushed the Barrancabermeja-based association to create and participate in political movements that aim to transform subaltern groups' struggles into political representation at national level, and develop an alternative historical bloc with national-popular incentives. Finally, this attitude also enabled the ACVC to develop economic projects which could serve as models for other communities, be they rural, indigenous, or Afro-Colombian. These are the three elements that need to be strengthened to bring about change and counter the state's efforts to strengthen its hegemony. Ultimately, as Gramsci argued, the transformation of subaltern groups' positions 'requires a transformation of the state and its oppressive social

⁸⁶⁵ Salcedo García, L. *Propuestas de paz territorial desde los movimientos sociales: multiculturalismo, ordenamiento territorial y ejemplos de paz territorial* (Bogotá, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) 2015).

relations, since subaltern groups can only cease being “subaltern” once they have transformed the relations of subordination that cause their marginalization’.⁸⁶⁶ The ATCC and the CdPSJA are not, in my view, able to bring about such a transformation of the state, and their initiatives, although valuable as such, can only have a limited, local impact. The ATCC has not been a binding social force for many years, and the CdPSJA finds itself both geographically and politically isolated at national level. The CdPSJA’s strategy for the consolidation of its self-autonomy, favouring alliances at international level rather than at national level to challenge state power, can only have a wider impact if it is accompanied by the development of a social force at the national level. My aim here is not to question the legitimacy of the community’s attitude towards the state and political power. The situation of the CdPSJA is profoundly unjust, and the state and the armed conflict are the only cause of its oppression. However, the CdPSJA’s attitude towards political change and the state has contributed to its isolation and lack of impact at the national level. For Gramsci, only the waging of a political struggle, a self-aware and historically informed conscious leadership combined with the spontaneous political activity of subaltern groups, and the development of an alternative historical bloc grounded in social alliances and a new common sense can enable subaltern groups to bring about political and social change. Out of the three communities under study, only the ACVC fulfils these conditions.

However, it is not clear yet whether the ACVC will be successful in posing a real challenge for the state’s political power and constitute a real counter-hegemonic force in the post-conflict setting. A likely outcome of the peace process is a passive revolution. Gramsci uses this concept to refer to situations in which the state incorporates subaltern groups’ progressive or even revolutionary demands into a conservative project of restoration. As argued in Chapter 1, for Gramsci, the passive aspect of revolutions consists in co-opting, cutting, or channelling the revolutionary potential of subaltern groups and popular initiatives. It also refers to a ‘molecular’ reorganisation of old ruling elites. The revolution consists of ‘the establishment of a new state, or a political superstructure generally suited to the eventual dominance of the capitalist mode of production’.⁸⁶⁷ In this sense, passive revolution is a technique employed by the ruling class when its hegemony is threatened or in contexts where there was no hegemonic domination. I argue that the peacebuilding process in

⁸⁶⁶ Green, M.E. ‘Gramsci cannot speak’, p. 86.

⁸⁶⁷ Showstack S. *Gramsci’s Politics*, p. 210.

Colombia is part of such a conservative project combining elements of reform and restoration together, introducing relatively far-reaching modifications, and envisaging systemic changes regarding land ownership. The text of the peace agreement between the FARC and the government contains such modifications and proposes progressive changes regarding land ownership and agrarian reform, transitional justice, and political participation. The national development model, however, is not questioned and will still be characterised by the prominent role played by mining industries. In addition, the political struggle within traditional political parties and elites that has surrounded the peace process symbolises the fact that we are witnessing a reorganisation of these elites. This struggle opposes the recently created Democratic Centre political party, led by former President Alvaro Uribe Velez, and the Partido de la U., led by current President Juan Manuel Santos. This political struggle has divided Colombian society since the beginning of the peace process, as the presidential elections in 2014 and the referendum about the peace agreement in October 2016 demonstrated. Together with the gap between cities and countryside, this deep division within Colombian society is one of the main challenges and shows the limits of peasant communities' efforts to render visible the impact of the armed conflict and its victims at national level, occupy space beyond rural areas, and build alliances that challenge these divisions and the anti-peasant bias as well. If peasant communities do not manage to spread their critical consciousness to other sectors of society, transform their initiatives into political representation, and acquire key positions within the economy, the outcome of the implementation of the peace agreement will very likely be what Gramsci called a passive revolution. In this regard, the concept of territorial peace might end up consolidating the rights of peasant and other rural communities, strengthening their local autonomy, and integrating them within a capitalist economy while keeping their most progressive demands in check and preserving the economic model which is at the basis of the ruling elites' political power.

Conclusion: Power, social change, and peacebuilding

While different solutions for building peace and solving internal armed-conflicts have been put forward over the past 25 years, no magic answers have been found thus far. This is because peacebuilding is not a technical problem that could easily be solved through a

technical solution. Rather, it is a political process within which the interests of different forces in contention face each other and whose outcome is determined by both the struggles between these very same forces and the structures in which they occur. This is the reason I opted for a Gramscian framework of analysis that places both a very specific conception of power and political struggle at the centre of the analysis. Peace is not built through the economy, neither through the state or the everyday, but through political struggle and arrangements led by social forces. This thesis links peacebuilding studies to insights from resistance studies and theories of non-violence with the idea that if peasant communities aim to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia, they must build strong counter-hegemonic alternatives. However, my findings and conclusions point to the fact that their initiatives are more likely to be absorbed by state power and the capitalist economic system rather than lead to systemic and structural social change. I am then still left with the question of how to achieve such change, and maybe with the illusionary hope to achieve change based on a Gramscian conception of power and strategies of war of position in order to 'become' state.

Faced with the apparent impossibility to achieve structural change and progressive social change, should not we rather move away from power, or rather redefine the concept of power and change the world without taking power, as Holloway puts it?⁸⁶⁸ Recent literature on resistance to neoliberalism and how to bring about social change is especially critical towards Gramsci's thinking about how to achieve social and political change.⁸⁶⁹ This is not the place to carry out a detailed analysis of this literature. Nevertheless, it is interesting to briefly reflect on the main arguments of this literature in the light of my findings, so as to point towards new areas for research. Beasley-Murray contests the use of hegemony as a theory in the context of Latin America.⁸⁷⁰ He argues that the exercise of power in Latin America since the Spanish Conquests has nothing to do with hegemony. Consent was never at stake. For him, 'social order is secured through habit and affect'.⁸⁷¹ Similarly, 'social change is never achieved through any putative counterhegemony'.⁸⁷² Arditì analyses these 'ways of doing politics that bypass the neo-Gramscian logic of hegemony and counter-hegemony',

⁸⁶⁸ Holloway, J. *Change the World*.

⁸⁶⁹ Arditì, B. 'Post-hegemony: politics outside the usual post-Marxist paradigm', *Contemporary Politics*, 13:3 (2007) pp. 205-226; Beasley-Murray, J. *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis, M.N., University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London, Pluto Press, 2005); Holloway, J. *Change the World*.

⁸⁷⁰ Beasley-Murray, J. *Posthegemony*, pp. 1-11.

⁸⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, J. *Posthegemony*, pp. 1-11.

⁸⁷² Beasley-Murray, J. *Posthegemony*, pp. ix-x.

which characterise ‘most of what is usually inventoried under the name ‘politics’ today’.⁸⁷³ These ways of doing politics do not try to form a consensus around a collective counter-hegemonic project that coalesce different identities, needs and interests in order to ‘become state’.⁸⁷⁴ Similarly, Day argues that to establish a counter-hegemonic movement is to ‘remain within the logic of neoliberalism’ and accept the ‘hegemony of hegemony’.⁸⁷⁵ The latter refers to ‘the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and *en masse*, across an entire national or supranational space’. Day argues that it is possible to operate ‘non-hegemonically’ and to escape the ‘logic of hegemony’. Some groups are already challenging this logic and exploring ‘the possibilities of non-statist, non-capitalist, egalitarian modes of social organisation’.⁸⁷⁶ They are ‘working to reverse the colonization of everyday life by taking control over – and responsibility for – the conduct of their own affairs’.⁸⁷⁷ They aim to bring about radical social and political change, but without seeking to take state power or influence its operations.⁸⁷⁸ Day forges the concept of ‘affinity for affinity’ to represent how these groups operate, a ‘non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments’.⁸⁷⁹ This logic is guided by a groundless solidarity that does not postulate any form of inequality as the central axis of struggle, and an infinite responsibility to respect ‘another Other’.⁸⁸⁰ According to Day, such a logic is better equipped to face neoliberalism and bring about radical social change. We do not need to go through the state and its mediating institutions to bring about change.

Finally, Holloway argues for ‘changing the world without taking power’.⁸⁸¹ His theory aims to undermine the logics of capital at its roots and reorganise work and social relations outside capital. For Holloway, we should not focus on seizing state power if we want to change the world, be it through revolutionary means or political elections. Rather,

[...] what is at issue in the revolutionary transformation of the world is not whose power but the very existence of power. What is at issue is not who exercises power, but how to create a world based on the mutual recognition of human dignity, on the formation of social relations which are not power relations.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷³ Arditì, B. ‘Post-hegemony’, p. 224.

⁸⁷⁴ Arditì, B. ‘Post-hegemony’.

⁸⁷⁵ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, p. 8.

⁸⁷⁶ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, pp. 203-204.

⁸⁷⁷ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, pp. 203-204.

⁸⁷⁸ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, p. 8.

⁸⁷⁹ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, p. 8.

⁸⁸⁰ Day, R.J.F. *Gramsci is Dead*, p. 18.

⁸⁸¹ Holloway, J. *Change the World*.

⁸⁸² Holloway, J. *Change the World*, pp. 17-18.

In other words, we need to get out of the capitalist logic of power and transform power-over into power-to. The initiative led by the CdPSJA is the one that most resembles Holloway's theory, which itself puts the Zapatista's resistance in Mexico at the centre of its reflections. The idea is that by developing social relations based on human solidarity and dignity rather than capital, social change from below can gain sufficient impulse to challenge social relations as a whole. My analysis suggests, however, that whilst this might have a strong impact at community level through isolation from the direct impact of state violence and policies, it will fail to achieve change at regional and national level. Although the CdPSJA managed to survive and grow amid very adverse conditions, to say the least, it has not been successful in spreading its new critical consciousness at national level. Similarly, the Zapatista experience has not been successful in influencing Mexican state policies and political realities.⁸⁸³ The problem lies in how to establish a link between the transforming of everyday social relations and the challenging of political power at higher levels. Although providing an answer to this question is beyond the scope of this thesis, my analysis suggests that Gramsci's theory of hegemony contains more promising insights. In the context of this thesis, the ACVC's experience shows how it is possible to mobilise and build on peasants' everyday culture and ideologies to develop alternative social, political, and economic projects. Even though it might be kept in check by state power, the ACVC has indeed built an alternative historical bloc that has the potential to challenge state power and capitalism, and be a credible counter-hegemonic alternative in the post-conflict setting.

⁸⁸³ Worth, O. *Resistance*, pp. 52-56.

Conclusion

Upon embarking on this thesis, my concern was with the contribution of human rights defenders to peacebuilding in Colombia. Such a concern was born out of four years working for the international non-governmental organisation Peace Brigades International in Colombia, which provides protective accompaniment to human rights defenders and communities of internally displaced people. This thesis is the result of reflections on my experience working with lawyers and activists, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant communities, and victims of the conflict altogether. This thesis therefore illustrates the evolution of my thinking on how to bring about peaceful social and political change in Colombia.

Many Colombian civil society organisations and activists use a human rights discourse in their efforts to make Colombia a better place. While I was at first concerned with human rights, such a focus lost importance through the process of identifying and defining a specific empirical subject, and then designing a theoretical framework suitable for the analysis of peasant communities' contribution to peacebuilding. I quickly realised that a sole focus on human rights, and especially on protecting rights, could only lead to the reproduction of power and would never bring about systemic change. Furthermore, my own interest in nonviolence, also a result of my involvement with PBI, led me to take an interest in resistance studies, which in turn pointed me toward the insights of Gramsci's political theory. As a sole focus on human rights would not have allowed me to understand how peasant communities could challenge the power networks and structures at the origin of their alienation, I felt the potential for change had to be found in the resistance and construction of alternatives led by peasant communities against armed conflict, the state and neoliberalism. My experience as a practitioner, working alongside human rights defenders, peace activists and victims of the conflict also convinced me that peace processes are first and foremost social and political struggles. It is the outcome of these struggles that determines the *nature* of the peace achieved, - more than any economic plan, disarmament, demobilisation and reinsertion program, or post-conflict legislation. This is not to underestimate the importance of those aspects of any peacebuilding process. Rather, this is to acknowledge that at the heart of peacebuilding processes lies a struggle for power. This new perspective led me to identify

Gramsci's political theory, and his specific concept of power as both consent and coercion, as a useful tool to understand peasant communities' political struggles against armed actors, the state, and neoliberalism. As a result, this thesis contributes to knowledge on peacebuilding processes by engaging in a dialogue between nonviolence and resistance studies, Gramsci's political theory, and, of course, peacebuilding studies.

The fact that I place my thesis at the crossroad between these three literatures explains why, at times, there appears to be a tension between peacebuilding and hegemony. I criticise current peacebuilding theories for neglecting material factors and structural power relations. However, Gramsci's interest was in struggles over hegemony, understood as the dominance of a particular class or social group over other social groups. This might not intuitively seem to be the same as peace. By making such a parallel between peacebuilding and struggles for hegemony, I might be accused of adopting a clearly subjective and biased perspective where the outcome of peasant communities' struggles would not result in peace but merely in the replacement of old social and political values with new ones. However, this is precisely the supposedly neutral nature of peacebuilding and conflict management theories that I criticise in this thesis. Peace and peacebuilding are often seen, and practiced, as technocratic and apolitical solutions to conflicts. While it is true that some challenges arise when trying to import Gramsci's concepts into peacebuilding studies, my claim is that peacebuilding studies rather benefit from it. By doing that, my aim is to revitalise peacebuilding studies, which are trapped by theories favouring the maintenance of dominant systems and the status-quo.

The central research question of this thesis is therefore concerned with how an analysis of civil local peace initiatives resisting power-networks and structures responsible for the prolongation of conflict in Colombia, contributes to understanding social and political change in war-torn societies. The empirical answer to this question, in the form of an analysis of the struggle led by the Carare Workers and Peasants Association (ATCC), the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó (CdPSJA), and the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (ACVC), is the first contribution to knowledge that my thesis offers. These three communities are located in regions colonised only relatively recently, and where the state has historically been absent. These regions have also been amongst the most affected by the dynamics of the armed conflicts, with rebel and paramilitary groups, forced displacement, massacres, forced disappearances, and land grabbing on a massive scale. They find

themselves at the heart of the conflict in all its dimensions; geographical, economic, social and political. But the location of these communities in these strategic regions is not the only reason they have to be considered as key to any post-conflict settlement in Colombia, as is reflected in the concept of territorial peace put forward by the government. The ATCC, the CdPSJA, and the ACVC are three of the most symbolic and prominent initiatives led by rural communities to resist the armed conflict and eventually build peace. The ATCC, founded in 1987, is a pioneer in this regard, and was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1991. The ACVC was born in 1996, a result of state and paramilitary abuses against peasants in the Magdalena Medio region. Finally, the CdPSJA has demonstrated since its creation in 1997 the possibility of developing alternatives amid armed conflict. It has also received a widespread international support.

My analysis of the initiatives of these three communities answers recent calls to not only ‘appreciate the extraordinary contribution [Latin American social movements] make to our understanding of grass roots social change’, but also to reflect ‘critically on its limitations and unfulfilled potentialities’.⁸⁸⁴ For that purpose, I developed a theoretical framework based on the political theory of the Italian thinker and activist Antonio Gramsci. I identified three key elements, which I used to assess the role of the ATCC, the CdPSJA, and the ACVC in peacebuilding. The transformation of common sense into a critical consciousness, control over space through strategies of war of position, and the building of alternative historical blocs all helped me explain the dynamics and logics of peasant communities’ peacebuilding initiatives. I therefore assumed in this thesis that the struggle between peasant communities on one hand, and armed actors, the state and neoliberalism on the other, is a struggle for hegemony in which all these actors fight over norms and values, space, political power, and peace. The argument I developed throughout this thesis is that peasant communities have managed to develop alternatives, and have the potential to challenge the structures of the war system⁸⁸⁵ in Colombia. In claiming that peasant communities have strong capacities to bring about social and political change and address the roots causes of the conflict, I do not wish to assimilate them into a kind of Gramscian modern prince that could guide the counter-hegemonic initiatives of subaltern groups. Rather, my point is that the resistance they have demonstrated so far against state domination, armed conflict, and the impact of

⁸⁸⁴ Pearce, J. et al. ‘Editorial: Learning from Latin America’, *Community Development Journal*, 45:3 (2010) p. 267.

⁸⁸⁵ Richani, N. *Systems of Violence*.

neoliberalism represents a strong challenge to the war system, the development model promoted by the government, and the continuation of Colombian ruling elites' domination in the post-conflict setting.

To begin with, as I argue in chapter 3, their ability to go beyond the common sense imposed upon them by armed actors, the state, and traditional political parties alike created opportunities in a context that did not seem to offer any. Peasant communities managed to reinstate the political process over the military dynamics of the armed conflict and state coercion at a time when violence had reached its peak in intensity. Where there seemed to be no choice, they were able to overcome the fatalism and determinism that, together with coercion, was at the origin of peasant's passivity. The emergence of a particular political consciousness, linked to a conception of the world that challenges the common sense imposed upon subaltern groups by ruling elites, and the loss of fear interacted with each other from the birth of these peasant communities until the present day. I demonstrate in chapter 2 that the latter aspect- the loss of fear, was instrumental to the decision to break the law of silence and overtly resist armed actors and the state. It was also key to building the collective strength required to sustain such initiatives in time. Finally, the loss of fear made possible the unity of thought and practice, symbolised by the adoption of the guiding principles of neutrality, nonviolence, and human rights. These principles informed the normative framework that enabled peasant communities' members to resist in the midst of armed conflict. They also represent a rupture with past peasant-led movements and protests, from the peasant leagues of the 1930s to the peasant republics of the 1960s which led to the creation of the FARC.

However, a material basis was required onto which this new critical consciousness could be enacted and materialised. I demonstrated in chapter 4 that the territory provided such a material basis, not only for the subsistence and everyday lives of peasant communities, but also for their memory-building efforts and for the development of alternative modes of production based on solidarity and dignity. Phrased in a Gramscian terminology, this means that the autonomy of peasant communities is determined by the degree to which they manage to establish an 'organic' connection with the spaces they inhabit. The war of position waged by the ATCC, the CdPSJA, and the ACVC was therefore aimed at establishing a control over their territory through strategies of protection, appropriation and production. I argued that the extent to which peasant communities managed to assert such a control over space

determined their place within society, as expressed in terms of individual and collective rights, location with the economy, and political power. In this regard, a capacity to control space is key to challenging the impact of neoliberal economic policies promoted by the state.

Finally, I argued in chapter 5 that the ATCC, the CdPSJA and the ACVC represented three different models of social and political transformation. Beginning with the self-autonomy of the CdPSJA with their rejection of both the State and capitalism, to the confrontational, power-seeking strategies of the ACVC, and finally the liberal stance of the ATCC and their efforts to bring the state back in. All three peasant communities under study have then adopted different approaches and strategies toward the state and capitalism in their efforts to resist and build alternatives, resulting in the emergence of alternative blocs. In my view, these approaches help explain the extent to which each one of these peasant communities succeeded in challenging the power structures at the roots of the armed conflict.

On the basis on these findings, I conclude in chapter 6 that the struggle between peasant communities on one hand, and the state and neoliberalism on the other, is likely to end up in a process of passive revolution; meaning that some of the peasant communities' demands will be integrated into the government's vision for the post-conflict setting, symbolised by the concept of territorial peace. It also means that peasant communities will maintain a strong impact at the local level, depending on the extent to which they have managed to develop alternative historical blocs, and that Colombia's ruling elites will make concessions, to a certain extent. But my findings and conclusion also point to the fact that peasant communities' initiatives are likely to be absorbed by state power and the capitalist economic system, rather than lead to systemic and structural social change. Even through relative structural change regarding land ownership and rural reform might be achieved - thanks to the control over space established by peasant communities, and strengthened by the inclusion of structural reforms to land ownership within the Peace Agreements - the basics of the economic model will be preserved, thereby maintaining the power of Colombian ruling elites. My contention is that, for peasant communities to have a wider impact, they would need to spread their critical consciousness to other sectors of society, such as the urban middle classes. They would also have to extend their control over space and develop alternative economic models that reflect their critical consciousness, placing their values of dignity, community and solidarity at their centre. Finally, the need for an alternative historical

bloc that could transform peasant communities' vision for peace into political representation is the final aspect highlighted in my findings. So far, only the ACVC has managed to gain political influence at the national level, but this has not yet materialised into political representation within political society.

I also argued in chapter 6 that while the ACVC is closest to a Gramscian understanding of counter-hegemony, the ATCC can be characterised as a case of what Day calls a 'politics of demands' (Day, 2005: 14), and the CdPSJA as illustrating the logic of 'affinity for affinity' (Day, 2005: 8), or even as an attempt to change the world without taking power following Holloway's argument (Holloway, 2010). Contrary to the arguments made by post-hegemony theories though, my findings suggest that the most successful initiative so far, and the most capable of bringing about social and political change, is the one led by the ACVC. The ATCC now lacks the internal strength and cohesion to represent a credible alternative, and the CdPSJA is isolated both at the regional and national level. It is hard to see how they will avoid being integrated and dissolved within the new social order promoted by the state. Even one of my interviewees, a member of the CdPSJA, affirmed that, without a doubt, that the system was going to break the initiative of the community.⁸⁸⁶ And while I honestly don't believe that the CdPSJA will disappear anytime soon, it is hard to see how it could extend the impact it has had at the local level to a regional or national scale. This echoes Owen Worth's analysis of the Zapatista's relative achievements (Worth, 2013: 55), the Zapatistas being another peasant movement upon whose experience much of Holloway's theorizing relies. In contrast, the ACVC has created strong networks and alliances, has developed a sustainable political economy based on control over space, and has built on peasants' everyday lives, culture, and identity to develop credible alternatives for peace. In addition, it has started to reach out to an urban middle class population through the commercialisation of its products in Colombian cities. Ultimately, it has become a national counter-hegemonic force which succeeds in linking peasants' concerns with the national peace agenda. My findings therefore coincide with Worth's argument that counter-hegemony is 'the most useful departure point for us to understand and locate the strength of contestation to dominant forms of hegemony'. Worth adds that it also 'gives us some idea of the limits and potential of a specific form of resistance' (Worth, 2013: 36). In this regard, it would be interesting to explore whether my findings were

⁸⁸⁶ CdP#9.

skewed or not by the theoretical framework I used by conducting a kind of counter-analysis using insights from post-hegemony theories. In any case, I believe that engaging with post-hegemony theories in the context of peacebuilding processes could bring new and fruitful insights to the field of peacebuilding studies and the role of local actors in bringing about social and political change.

This summary of my thesis' main argument highlights the interaction between the empirical context of peasant communities and Gramsci's political theory. While the use of Gramsci's concepts enabled me to shed new light on the roles and initiatives of peasant communities in peacebuilding, the communities' experiences also led me to challenge Gramsci's reflections on power and political struggles. This was done firstly by applying his ideas to a peripheral society where traditional forms of power coexist with a democratic constitution. Secondly, by applying the concept of hegemony to a state which has been going through an organic crisis for the past five decades, whose authority is contested and whose presence over the territory can be characterised as uneven. Thirdly, in contrast to Gramsci's reflections on the potential of rural and peasant-based movements, I analysed peasant communities and demonstrated that they have managed to develop clear and coherent alternatives to the state and its neoliberal policies. Whilst Gramsci was first and foremost concerned with organising workers in the context of rising fascism and capitalism, a struggle over land and natural resources is at the centre of the Colombian conflict. It logically follows that peasants are therefore key actors in its resolution and cannot be considered as powerless as Gramsci implied. Finally, the territorial dimension of peasant communities' struggles pushed me to spatialize Gramsci's political theory, focusing on his concept of war of position. In this regard, my contention is that positions gained within the territory lead to the gaining of positions within society. In the Colombian context, any strategy aiming to counter the impact of violence and neoliberal policies has not only to be political, cultural, or economic, but also spatial.

This theoretical framework based on Gramsci's political theory enabled me to offer new insights to peacebuilding studies. These insights are rooted in a critique of the peacebuilding literature. My first approach to the analysis of peasant communities was indeed to look at what peacebuilding studies had to say about local actors. I found that the concepts put forward by the critical strand of the peacebuilding literature, such as hybridity or the everyday, fail to provide the necessary analytical tools to understand how local actors

could challenge the power structures that condition their everyday lives. Neither do they allow us to understand how the everyday can be mobilised to challenge these very same structures. My thesis therefore not only contributes to knowledge in relation to the peacebuilding literature but also develops a new theoretical framework for the study of peacebuilding by engaging with Gramscian, resistance and nonviolence studies. Such an engagement has the potential to find a way out of the impasse that has characterised peacebuilding studies for the past few years. This thesis shows the relevance of drawing upon resistance studies, and especially on the political theory of Antonio Gramsci, for the study of peacebuilding processes. Insights gained from the literature on civil resistance and nonviolence drew my attention to a different concept of power, emphasising both coercion and consent, which proved useful to understand local actor's autonomy, agency, and capacities to bring about social and political change. I also found that Gramsci's concept of power was similar to Gene Sharp's theorization of power. However, Gramsci's theory of hegemony goes further than theories of nonviolence as it points to the need to develop political alternatives to the hegemony of the ruling elites. My thesis went on to make original use of Gramsci's political theory to assess peasant communities' role in peacebuilding.

Following this line of argument, the best way to bring about a peace that addresses the roots causes of conflict is through the development of credible political alternatives - based on local resistance - that aim to replace the system which sustains these roots causes. Institutional or functional approaches to peacebuilding that aim to build states or strengthen local actors' capacities within a liberal framework have failed so far to bring about such a progressive peace. Hybrid solutions or interventions targeting the everyday will also end up in mere reformism or passive revolution, due to the power of international actors and the national, local elites they support. The development of strong political alternatives that also manage to exert a key function within the economy would therefore go a long way in addressing roots causes of conflicts. My thesis shows that in Colombia, peasant communities have managed to build such a political alternative and develop a political economy fit for the post-conflict setting because they have developed an organic relationship with the territory. With the concept of territorial peace, the government has acknowledged the key role that this territorial dimension will play during the implementation of the Peace Agreements. This provides opportunities for rural communities to influence the post-conflict setting, although it also presents a risk of being co-opted into the government's vision. In this regard, I show

in my thesis that the different models of social transformation and the attitudes towards the state and the economy adopted by the ATCC, the CdPSJA, and the ACVC have had an impact on their ability to resist co-optation and challenge the power structures that are at the origins of the conflict.

I also need to acknowledge the limitations to my findings. The findings apply only to the struggle led by peasant communities against the state, armed conflict, and neoliberalism. Even though I justified my choice to only focus on rural, peasant communities, this choice unavoidably limits the scope of my findings. There are numerous other struggles and examples of resistance in Colombia, led by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, trade unions, women's movements, LGBT associations, and organisations representing victims of the armed conflict. Nevertheless, although the contents of an analysis of these struggles would be different, I believe the conclusions would be the same. A process of passive revolution is at work in Colombia through the implementation of the Peace Agreements, which will integrate all subaltern groups with a new social and political order.

My findings might also find their limitations when applied to other contexts. Although the application of my research to different contexts was not a primary objective, my research question hinted at that possibility. I applied Gramsci's concepts to a context of armed conflict which is very different to both the context in which Gramsci developed his theory and those to which he applied his concepts. Although there is a risk of overstretching the meaning of Gramsci's concepts, I showed in the first chapter that Gramsci's theory of hegemony can be applied to peripheral countries based on his reflections on the North/South question. I also demonstrated that contexts of armed conflicts or civil wars can be characterised as organic crises. In this regard, even though the Colombian state hegemony is uneven, it can be considered as a modern state against which strategies of war of position can be used. Finally, I argued that peacebuilding processes have to be conceptualised as struggles for hegemony. While the state tries to consolidate its hegemony, subaltern groups resist and develop alternatives. I contend therefore that my theoretical framework could be applied to other contexts and settings in which peace processes take place, and which fulfil the conditions that I emphasised in the first chapter. Gramsci's theory of hegemony has in fact previously been

applied to war-torn societies,⁸⁸⁷ and so while not new in this sense, is the first to specifically use Gramsci to examine the role of local actors within peacebuilding processes.

These limitations point to further research opportunities. I will only address here what I consider to be the most promising of these new research paths. First, the logical follow-up to my thesis would be to apply my theoretical framework to other resistance movements in Colombia and elsewhere, not only rural, such as Afro-Colombian communities, but also urban such as the Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres. It is very likely that such studies could bring additional insights into the potential of local resistance to challenge the roots causes of the armed conflict. Secondly, it would be very interesting to further explore questions related to how to bring about social change by engaging in a dialogue between Gramscian studies and post-hegemony theories. Whilst my thesis indicates that the ACVC had the strongest impact of the three communities under study, because it is closest to a Gramscian understanding of counter-hegemony, I still conclude that the struggle between peasant communities and the state is likely to end up in a process of passive revolution. For this reason, it is necessary to continue to engage in a discussion on the role of the state in bringing about social change and the strategies that local actors should use to bring about a progressive peace.

Finally, one of the most critical issues faced by human rights defenders and activists all over the world, both in war-torn societies and in countries in which there is no armed conflict, is land. As part of my continued experience as a practitioner working with environmental and land activists, I have witnessed the need for the development of effective strategies to confront and counter land-grabbing by state-sponsored national and multinational companies. My thesis showed that space plays a key role in the resistance of peasant communities in Colombia, and that controlling space is becoming more and more important if human rights are not to be empty rights. It is therefore crucial to explore further how space could be integrated within strategies of war of position. This could be done by studying other peasant-based movements defending their rights to stay on their land in the face of economic projects aimed at the exploitation of natural resources. But this could be linked to the study of space within the struggles led by urban movements in Western societies, such as Occupy or the Spanish indignados, and could provide useful insights into how to counter the spatial impact of neoliberalism.

⁸⁸⁷ Bridoux, J. *American Foreign Policy*.; Dodge, T. 'The Sardinian'; Dodge, T. 'Coming face to face'; Short, N. *The International*.

I conclude this research with even more questions than I had upon embarking on it. Questions about how to bring about peace, but also concerns about how to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism within peripheral countries such as Colombia. The model of development at the origins of Colombia's armed conflict still prevails. One of the risks looming large in the context of the implementation of the Peace Agreements is that the impact of neoliberalism be much worse than it was during the armed conflict. Moreover violence, as one of the main obstacles to economic growth in Colombia over the past decades, will not disappear overnight. In fact, there are already signs that criminal groups are filling the void left by the demobilisation of the FARC⁸⁸⁸. The end of the armed conflict is also very likely to attract investors and encourage the insertion of Colombia's national economy within global markets along neoliberal lines. The internal struggles of the Colombian political and economic elites that have rumbled on since the end of the 1990s⁸⁸⁹ place the elites linked to the exploitation and ownership of land in opposition to the industrial elites that are closely connected to international financial markets and neoliberalism. The government of Juan Manuel Santos represents the interests of the latter, and the 'locomotora minera', the motto used by the government to symbolise its economic policies based on mining, is at the basis of the National Development Plan. The pressure on rural communities, and on the land they live on, will therefore be even higher than during the armed conflict, even though the nature of violence will be different. The development of alternatives based on control over space and over their territories will be key for peasant communities in order to resist and challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism and Colombia's ruling elites in the post-conflict setting.

⁸⁸⁸ El Tiempo. 'Zonas de las Farc las coparon bandas comprando franquicias'. 14 May 2017. <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/entrevista-de-maria-isabel-rueda-a-ariel-avila-sobre-las-zonas-de-las-farc-87994>. Last accessed on 16 May 2017.

⁸⁸⁹ Richani, N. *Systems of Violence*, p. 211.

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Annexes

Full list of interviews

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